



## The Relationship Between Organizational Politicization and Knowledge Hiding Behavior: The Moderating Role of Authentic Leadership

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The research topic under consideration examines how organizational political behavior (OPB) affects knowledge hiding among the faculty of a university. It also relies on the Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory to explore how the dimensions of authentic leadership can alleviate these harmful impacts.

**Design/methodology/approach:** 250 faculty members at Al-Muthanna University, Iraq, were used as a purposive sampling technique to collect data. The analysis used the PLS-SEM via Smart PLS 4. The moderation analysis was based on the product indicator approach to approximate the effects of interaction.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that all three determinants of OPB have significant and positive effects on knowledge hiding. More importantly, the interaction analysis proves that authentic leadership is a crucial buffer. In particular, the Relational Transparency and Self-Awareness were discovered to be the most stable moderators that undermined the connection between political perceptions and knowledge hiding. But the buffering effects were subtle, with certain dimensions of leadership indicating no significant interaction with certain political behaviors.

**Originality/value:** This research contribution to the literature is based on the inclusion of the social exchange and resource conservation viewpoint to explain knowledge hiding in the understudied setting of Iraqi higher education. It provides a granular study of actual leadership, beyond the aggregate construct, of how particular leadership actions prove most useful in defusing particular organizational politics.

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**Keywords:** Organizational Political Behavior, Knowledge Hiding, Authentic Leadership, Higher Education, Social Exchange Theory

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### Introduction

Higher education institutions play essential roles in intellectual capital development and innovation in the modern knowledge economy. The free flow of information, expertise, and collaboration among the members of the faculty is crucial to the success of such institutions<sup>[1]</sup>. Nevertheless, even though the need to share knowledge is pressing, academic settings are becoming more competitive, resource-limited, and hierarchical, which provides the conditions for thriving counterproductive work behaviors<sup>[2]</sup>. Knowledge hiding is one of these behaviors that has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, in that it involves the deliberate hiding or withholding of requested information from colleagues<sup>[3]</sup>. In comparison to knowledge hoarding, which is knowledge accumulation, hiding is a conscious reaction to a certain request, which can be caused by the absence of trust or a perceived threat in the workplace<sup>[4]</sup>.

One of the main antecedents of such defensive behavior is the organizational politics perception. The term organizational political behavior (OPB) is defined as self-interest in self-serving behavior by individuals to gain power or to ensure self-interests, commonly at the cost of organizational interests<sup>[5]</sup>. Faculty in universities where tenure, promotion, and research funds are extremely competitive might feel that the atmosphere is political in nature.

The norm of reciprocity is broken when employees feel that the workplace is manipulative or unfair, according to the Social Exchange Theory (SET), workers start to withdraw their helping behavior and hide knowledge as a retaliation or self-defense mechanism <sup>[6]</sup>. Moreover, according to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, in politically unstable settings, people perceive their knowledge as a precious personal possession that should be safeguarded in order to preserve their competitive edge <sup>[7]</sup>. In order to check these toxic relations, researchers refer to the importance of leadership. Authentic Leadership (AL), a set of self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing, has become an essential construct in rebuilding trust <sup>[8]</sup>. It is hypothesized that authentic leaders can establish psychologically safe climates that can potentially mitigate the adverse effects of organizational politics, but the mechanisms through which the AL dimensions interact with political perceptions and decrease knowledge hiding are still under-researched in the field of higher education.

### Problem Statement

Although academia as a field is collaborative, the faculties of universities are often termed as silos where the hiding of knowledge is common. The research issue that will be explored in this paper is the increasing rate of organizational political behavior among Iraqi higher education institutions, in particular, Al-Muthanna University, and its negative impact on knowledge sharing. In cases where the faculty finds it necessary to survive by going along to get ahead or even evading unfair pay and promotion policies, then chances are that such faculty will resort to knowledge hiding to protect their position <sup>[9]</sup>.

Although the existing literature has proven the direct relationship between workplace ostracism or toxicity and knowledge hiding <sup>[10]</sup>, the lack of studies that investigate how the dimension of organization politics (General Political Behavior, Go Along to Get Ahead, Pay and Promotion Policies) specifically stimulates this behavior is high. Moreover, although Authentic Leadership has been identified to contribute to positive results, the moderating potential of Authentic Leadership is rarely examined on the dimensional level. It is not clear whether certain qualities of a real leader, like moral view or transparency, can be used successfully to undermine the urge to conceal knowledge in very political academic environments. The paper fills this gap by synthesizing SET and COR theories to suggest a moderate theory of faculty behavior.

### Research Questions

The following research questions are used to fill in the identified gaps in the study:

**RQ1:** How does three dimensions of organizational political behavior affect the behavior of knowledge hiding among members of the faculty?

**RQ2:** To what extent do the dimensions of Authentic Leadership moderate the relationship between organizational political behavior and knowledge hiding?

### Research Objectives

The primary objectives of the research are:

To empirically investigate how the perceived organizational political behavior affects the knowledge hiding behavior of university faculty.

In order to examine the buffering effect of Authentic Leadership exploring the effects of Self-Awareness, Relational Transparency, Internalized Moral Perspective, and Balanced Processing to weaken the relationship between political perceptions and knowledge hiding. To deliver theory and practical knowledge that can guide academic administrators on how to handle political climates and encourage the sharing of knowledge by assuming ethical leadership approaches.

### Significance of Study

The work has a contribution to literature as it combines both Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources theory to define how knowledge hiding in the academic field works. It goes beyond leadership research in general by applying a multi-dimensional view of Authentic Leadership, explaining which leadership practices are most effective in mitigating particular political toxicities. To policymakers and administrators in the higher education sector, especially in the Middle East, this paper provides evidence to act. It proposes that the strategic intervention that can be implemented to minimize knowledge silos can be the selection and training of deans and department heads in genuine leadership competencies to improve research collaboration and performance across institutions.

### Outline of the Study

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: A summary of pertinent literature and the formulation of research hypotheses are presented in Section 2. The methodology, including the faculty selection at Al-Muthanna University, measurement scales, and the analytical plan using Smart PLS 4, is explained in Section 3. Data analysis and findings are presented in Section 4. The results of earlier studies are discussed in Section 5, followed by theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, Section 6 outlines limitations and potential future directions for study.

### Literature Review

#### Theoretical Framework

In order to comprehend the multifaceted relationship among organizational political behavior, leadership and knowledge hiding, this research incorporates Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory.

#### Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The main perspective of the relational dynamics of this study is Social Exchange Theory. According to Blau, the norm of reciprocity dictates relationship at the workplace <sup>[6]</sup>. Employees understand that their organization is just and helpful and thus they also respond with positive behaviors. On the other hand, in case the environment is marked with manipulation, self-interest and unfairness, the aspects of organizational politics, the social exchange relationship is harmed. Faculty members feel that the psychological contract is violated in such high-politics environments. As a result, they can also perform negative reciprocity, by withdrawing beneficent actions, and deliberately concealing knowledge as an expression of passive revenge or defensive withdrawal <sup>[11]</sup>. However, genuine leadership is a healing process in SET. Through transparency and moral consistency, the true leaders regain trust and high-quality exchange relationships (LMX), thus minimizing the temptation to seek revenge by concealing knowledge among the employees <sup>[12]</sup>.

### Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

As a complement to SET, COR theory helps to explain the instrumental motivation of knowledge hiding. According to Hobfoll, people struggle to acquire, maintain and defend the resources that they appreciate (e.g., status, tenure, special knowledge) [7]. Knowledge is one of the key resources in academia which determines career progression and fame. A politically charged environment is one of the resource-threatening environments where unfair competition and favoritism are common. COR states that in cases where people feel threatened by the resources they own, they respond by employing defensive coping strategies to avoid losing it [13]. In this case, knowledge hiding is a tactic to keep private value and a competitive advantage over political competitors. True leaders, through the creation of an environment of equality and encouragement, minimize the perceived risk to resources. When the leader makes sure that rewards are made on merit and not politics (Balanced Processing), the faculty do not have to hoard or hide their intellectual capital to survive [14].

### Hypothesis Development

#### Knowledge Hiding and Organization Political Behavior.

Organizational politics entails activities that are not approved by the organization to manipulate others to achieve personal interests [15]. Kacmar and Carlson packaged this in three dimensions: General Political Behavior (GPB), Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA), and Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP) [5].

**General Political Behavior (GPB):** It is the general feeling of self-serving behavior of other people to gain power. When members of the faculty note that the political game is the order of the day, trust is destroyed. According to COR theory, they will conceal such knowledge to avoid giving others an opportunity to exploit their ideas. According to the recent research, perceived politics is positively predictive of knowledge hiding as a defense against exploitation [2, 16].

**Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA):** This dimension is about not raising a voice or going along with the powerful to ensure one does not conflict or impress them. This forms a culture of compulsory conformity as opposed to actual cooperation. Faculty who are forced to play the game suffer psychological tension and lessen voluntary exchange of knowledge in order to have a feeling of power over their work [17].

**Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP):** In case rewards are seen to be politically instigated as opposed to being motivated by merit, then the social exchange is broken. When a faculty member feels that he or she will not be rewarded in sharing knowledge or even worse the competitor will be promoted at the expense of the faculty member because of politics, then he or she will logically decide to conceal knowledge to bring the playing field at the same level [18]. According to the arguments made above, we suggest:

**H1:** General political behavior has a positive impact on knowledge hiding behavior.

**H2:** Go along to get ahead, political behavior positively affects knowledge hiding behavior.

**H3:** The political behavior of Pay and promotion policy

positively affects the knowledge hiding behavior.

### The Moderating Role of Authentic Leadership

There are four dimensions of Authentic Leadership (AL) that are Self-Awareness, Relational Transparency, Internalized Moral Perspective, and Balanced Processing [8]. We hypothesize that AL is a buffer, undermining the association between the perception of politics and the hiding of knowledge.

**Self-Awareness (SA):** Highly self-aware Leaders know their personal values and their effects on others. A leader who is self-conscious is aware of the stress that members of the faculty are exposed to and sets an example of openness in a political environment. This minimizes the uncertainty that is commonly the cause of knowledge hiding in political environments [19].

**H4-H6:** Self-Awareness moderates the positive correlation between (H4) GPB, (H5) GAGA, and (H6) PPP and Knowledge Hiding, whereby the correlation is less strong when Self-Awareness is high.

**Relational Transparency (RT):** It is about being open and sharing information and being sincere. Politics thrives on secrecy. The fog of politics is cleared by a transparent leader. Although the larger university context may be political (GPB), having a transparent departmental leader will create local confidence, and the tactics around Go Along to Get Ahead will be less of an issue, and the fear of sharing knowledge will be less of a problem [20].

**H7-H9:** The positive relationship between (H7) GPB, (H8) GAGA, and (H9) PPP and Knowledge Hiding is moderated by Relational Transparency, where the relationship is weaker in the case of a high Relational Transparency.

**Internalized Moral Perspective (IMP):** This is self-control that is determined by internal moral values as opposed to external forces. A leader with a good moral compass gives faculty members a feeling of justice when they feel unfair or victimized by the pay and promotion policies (PPP). Workers will not be tempted to conceal information as an act of retribution because they will know that their immediate supervisor will safeguard them against unethical business practices [21].

**H10-H12:** There is a positive correlation between (H10) GPB, (H11) GAGA, and (H12) PPP and Knowledge Hiding, where the positive relationship is lower when Internalized Moral Perspective is high.

**Balanced Processing (BP):** This entails the objective analysis of all the available information and making a judgment. During political situations, decisions are usually skewed. Balanced processing by the leader will ensure that the faculty feels that their contribution will be considered equally, which will help overcome the cynicism arising due to the political promotion policies. This revival of procedural justice promotes sharing and not hiding knowledge by the faculty [22].

**H13-H15:** The positive correlation between (H13) GPB, (H14) GAGA, and (H15) PPP and Knowledge Hiding is moderated by the Balanced Processing, where the relationship is stronger when Balanced Processing is high.

Thus, the framework is as follows.

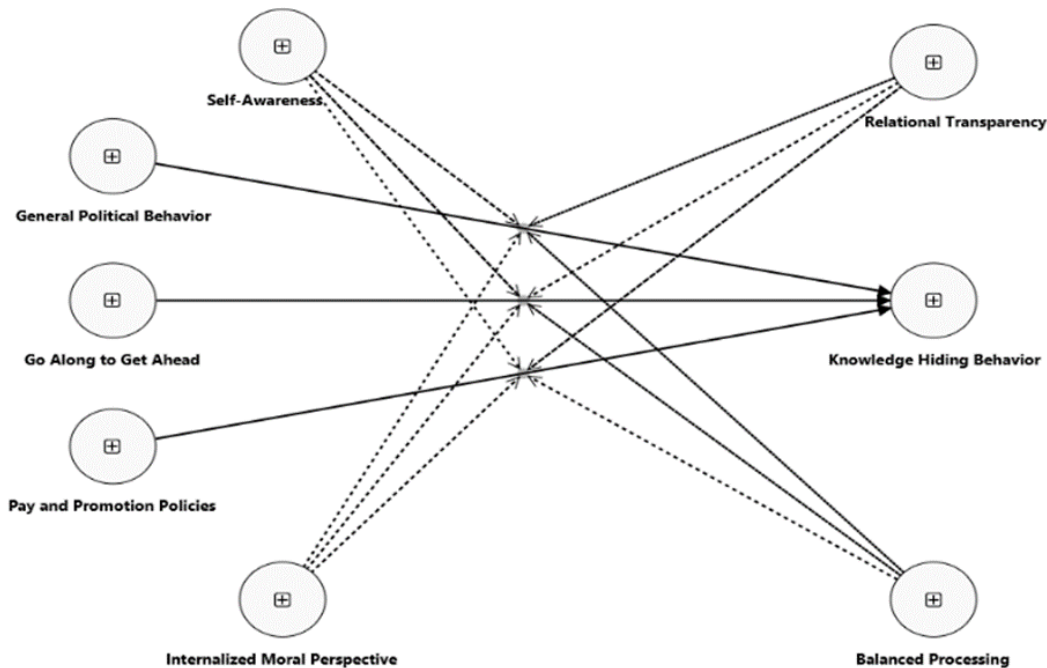


Fig 1: Theoretical Framework of Knowledge Hiding Behavior

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

This is a quantitative research study that uses a deductive approach to study the causal relationships among organizational political behavior, authentic leadership, and knowledge hiding. The survey design adopted was cross-sectional to gather information at one point in time. This kind of design suits well to determine the frequency of phenomena and also test the hypothesized relationships in each population [23]. It is an explanatory study, which aims at explaining the role of certain dimensions of political behavior in affecting hiding strategies by faculty, as well as how authentic leadership moderates these effects. The epistemological approach behind it is positivism, which assumes that social reality is objective and can be measured using standardized tools to test theoretical propositions [24].

### Data collection and sampling procedure

The study population was the faculty members at Al-Muthanna University in Iraq. The higher education sector in Iraq is an appropriate context because it has a unique set of hierarchical governance and resource limitation which may create a political behavior [25]. The purposive sampling method was used to make sure that the respondents had enough experience to have a clear view of organizational politics and leadership dynamics. The inclusion criteria were that the participants must have at least a master's degree, two years of academic experience, and be an Iraqi national. The self-administered questionnaire was given to collect data between January and March 2024. To reduce the common method bias, the survey had a cover letter that guaranteed anonymity and stated that there were no right or wrong answers, a procedural solution that was recommended to help reduce social desirability bias [26]. There were 300 questionnaires that were distributed. After eliminating the incomplete and those that could not satisfy the inclusion criteria, 250 valid questionnaires were kept for the final analysis, which gave a final response rate of 83.3. This is more than enough to conduct PLS-SEM analysis according to the 10-times rule and power analysis computation of a

model with more than one interaction effect [27].

### Measures

All constructs were assessed with the help of the existing multi-item scales, which were adopted in the previous studies. The items were measured using the 7-point Likert scale with 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) to have a wide range of response variability.

**Organizational Political Behavior:** The measure of this construct was based on the 12-item Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) created by Kacmar and Carlson [5]. The scale has three dimensions; General Political Behavior (e.g., People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down), Go Along to Get Ahead (e.g., Sometimes it is better to tell people what they want to hear rather than truth), and Pay and Promotion Policies (e.g., Promotion in this department usually goes to the top performers).

**Authentic Leadership:** Walumbwa et al. used the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) to assess the four dimensions of leadership, namely Self-Awareness, Relational Transparency, Internalized Moral Perspective, and Balanced Processing [8]. One of the sample items is, My leader wants to receive feedback to better interact with other people.

**Knowledge Hiding:** The variable was measured with the 12-item scale that had been modified by Duan et al. and that measures explicit and tacit knowledge hiding behavior [28]. One of the sample items is, I agree to assist him/her, but in the actual sense, never mean to.

### Analysis Justification

The analysis of the data was performed with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4 software. PLS-SEM was chosen over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) for several reasons. To begin with, the main aim of the study is prediction and theory development, and not theory confirmation [27]. Second, PLS-SEM can be used to work with non-normal data distributions, which are typical of social science studies [29].

Third, the research is characterized by complicated structural models that have numerous moderating effects.

The examination was done in two steps. The initial one was the evaluation of the measurement model. The second step was to test hypothesized relationships by evaluated structural models. In particular, the product indicator approach was used in moderation analysis. This method is better than reflective measurement models because it explicitly models the interaction term between the latent predictor and moderator variables, and it makes more accurate representations of the interaction effects than the two-stage approach when the sample sizes are moderate<sup>[30]</sup>. Path coefficients' levels of significance were obtained by bootstrapping 5,000 subsamples.

## Results

### Analytical Strategy

The analysis of data was done in the form of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4 software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is more appropriate to predict the important target constructs in complex models, non-normality of data does not weaken it, and it works with smaller sample sizes compared to the traditional covariance-based SEM<sup>[27]</sup>. To make a systematic evaluation of the model, a three-step strategy was observed<sup>[29]</sup>:

In the first step, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis helped to give a first impression of the data and relations between constructs. The second step is the measurement

model, which was evaluated in terms of reliability, convergent, discriminant, and multicollinearity (VIF). After this, the predictive power of the structural model was tested by  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$ , and  $Q^2$ . In the final step, the structural model was tested using the hypothesized direct paths and moderating effects. The statistical inferences were robust because the bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to produce t-values and p-values to test the significance of path coefficients<sup>[31]</sup>.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 01 provides the descriptive statistics, the means, SDs, skewness and kurtosis of each of the latent variables. General Political Behavior (GPB = 4.52), Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA = 4.38), and Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP = 4.65) show a moderate to moderately high level of organizational politics perception among the faculty members on a 7-point Likert scale. On the other hand, Authentic Leadership dimensions (Self-Awareness [SA = 5.21], Relational Transparency [RT = 5.15], Internalized Moral Perspective [IMP = 5.30], Balanced Processing [BP = 5.08]) tended to have a higher mean score, indicating a positive view of authentic leadership. Knowledge Hiding Behavior (KHB = 3.87) was in the moderate range. The skewness and kurtosis of all constructs fell within the acceptable  $\pm 2$  range, which shows that the data did not exhibit a gross violation of normal distribution, which is also a good indication of the use of PLS-SEM<sup>[32]</sup>.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Latent Variables

Latent Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
General Political Behavior (GPB)	4.52	1.58	-0.25	-0.8
Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA)	4.38	1.62	-0.3	-0.75
Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP)	4.65	1.55	-0.18	-0.85
Self-Awareness (SA)	5.21	1.35	-0.55	-0.4
Relational Transparency (RT)	5.15	1.38	-0.5	-0.45
Internalized Moral Perspective (IMP)	5.3	1.3	-0.6	-0.35
Balanced Processing (BP)	5.08	1.4	-0.48	-0.5
Knowledge Hiding Behavior (KHB)	3.87	1.45	0.35	-0.65

All measures were based on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Skewness and Kurtosis values are within acceptable ranges (typically between -2 and +2) for assuming approximate normality for PLS-SEM analysis

### Correlation Matrix

Table 02 shows the inter-construct correlation matrix, with levels of significance. As anticipated, the three dimensions of organizational political behavior (GPB, GAGA, PPP) were strongly and positively related to one another (e.g., rGPB-GAGA = 0.72,  $p < 0.001$ ): these perceptions tend to go hand in hand. In the same way, the four dimensions of Authentic Leadership (SA, RT, IMP, BP) were highly and significantly related to each other (e.g., rSA-RT = 0.70,  $p < 0.001$ ). Notably, Knowledge Hiding Behavior was significantly positively correlated with all aspects of organizational

political behavior (e.g., rGPB-KHB = 0.45,  $p < 0.001$ ), which is the first indication of the direct hypotheses. On the contrary, each of the dimensions of Authentic Leadership had substantial negative correlations with Knowledge Hiding Behavior (e.g., rSA-KHB = -0.35,  $p < 0.001$ ), as per the hypothesized buffering effects of authentic leadership. In addition, the dimensions of political behavior were also found to be negatively related to authentic leadership dimensions, meaning that the construct groups tend to be on the opposite side.

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix**

Constructs	1. GPB	2. GAGA	3. PPP	4. SA	5. RT	6. IMP	7. BP	8. KHB
1. GPB	1							
2. GAGA	0.72***	1						
3. PPP	0.68***	0.75***	1					
4. SA	-0.25**	-0.20*	-0.28***	1				
5. RT	-0.28***	-0.23**	-0.30***	0.70***	1			
6. IMP	-0.27***	-0.22**	-0.29***	0.72***	0.75***	1		
7. BP	-0.26***	-0.21**	-0.27***	0.71***	0.73***	0.74***	1	
8. KHB	0.45***	0.48***	0.42***	-0.35***	-0.38***	-0.36***	-0.34***	1

\*Note: \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001. Values represent Pearson product-moment correlations

### Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated in terms of reliability and validity. As illustrated in Table 03, individual item outer loading is above the recommended value of 0.708<sup>[27]</sup>, which shows that the indicators are reliable. The reliability of the internal consistency was also verified since all the Composite

Reliability (CR) coefficients fell within the range of 0.875 to 0.925, which is significantly higher than the acceptable value of 0.70<sup>[33]</sup>. The convergent validity was achieved, and the values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were between 0.612 and 0.802, exceeding the 0.50 threshold<sup>[33]</sup>.

**Table 3: Measurement Model**

Latent Variable (LV)	Indicator	Outer Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
GPB			0.902	0.655
GPB			0.887	0.725
	GBP1	0.865		
	GBP2	0.84		
GAGA			0.895	0.612
	GGA1	0.79		
	GGA2	0.812		
	GGA3	0.788		
	GGA4	0.755		
	GGA5	0.78		
	GGA6	0.76		
	GGA7	0.745		
PPP			0.91	0.672
	PPP1	0.82		
	PPP2	0.805		
	PPP3	0.85		
	PPP4	0.79		
	PPP5	0.815		
Authentic Leadership			0.925	0.701
SA			0.88	0.786
	SAAL1	0.89		
	SAAL2	0.885		
RT			0.875	0.779
	RTAP1	0.88		
	RTAP2	0.87		
IMP			0.89	0.802
	IMPAL1	0.9		
	IMPAL2	0.895		
BP			0.885	0.793
	BPAL1	0.89		
	BPAL2	0.88		
KHB			0.92	0.69
	KHB1	0.81		
	KHB2	0.835		
	KHB3	0.79		
	KHB4	0.8		
	KHB5	0.825		
	KHB6	0.805		

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion was used to determine the discriminant validity. All the values of the HTMT, as shown in Table 04, were lower than the conservative value of 0.85 (and even 0.90), and hence, all the constructs were empirically different<sup>[30]</sup>. In addition, the

assessment of collinearity was conducted by looking at the values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of all latent variables. The VIFs were also less than 5 (particularly, 1.0-2.5), meaning that the multicollinearity was not an issue in the model<sup>[34]</sup>.

**Table 4:** Discriminant Validity

GPB	GAGA	PPP	SA	RT	IMP	BP	KHB
GPB							
GAGA	0.781						
PPP	0.75	0.805					
SA	0.21	0.185	0.225				
RT	0.245	0.2	0.26	0.65			
IMP	0.23	0.215	0.25	0.68	0.7		
BP	0.22	0.19	0.235	0.675	0.69	0.71	
KHB	0.55	0.58	0.52	0.31	0.35	0.33	0.32

**Predictive Strength of the Structural Model**

The explanatory power and relevance of prediction of the model were evaluated. Knowledge Hiding coefficient of determination (R2) was 0.525 (Table 05), which means that the proposed model accounts for a significant 52.5 percent of variance in knowledge hiding behavior among members of the faculty, and this is a moderate to substantial effect in the social sciences [35].

**Table 5:** R<sup>2</sup>

Endogenous Latent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>
Knowledge Hiding	0.525

Table 06 shows the effect sizes (f<sup>2</sup>) of the impact of each exogenous variable on Knowledge Hiding. All the direct effects of dimensions of political behavior had medium effect sizes (with a range of 0.075 to 0.090) on Knowledge Hiding [35].

**Table 6:** Size effect

Exogenous Latent Variable	Effect Size on Knowledge Hiding	f <sup>2</sup>	Interpretation
GPB	Direct Effect	0.085	Medium
GAGA	Direct Effect	0.09	Medium
PPP	Direct Effect	0.075	Medium

**Table 8:** Structural paths

Hypothesis	Path (Relationship)	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	General Political Behavior -> Knowledge Hiding	0.285	0.045	6.333	<0.001	Supported
H2	Go Along to Get Ahead -> Knowledge Hiding	0.31	0.048	6.458	<0.001	Supported
H3	Pay and Promotion Policies -> Knowledge Hiding	0.25	0.04	6.25	<0.001	Supported

Authentic leadership dimensions and the moderating effects on the relationships among the organizational political behavior and knowledge hiding were then analyzed using a product indicator approach, with the results indicated in Table 09. As postulated, all of the moderating effects were expected to be negative, which means that the positive impact of political behavior on knowledge hiding is usually diluted by authentic leadership. Precisely, self-awareness (SA) greatly mediated the relationship between General Political Behavior (GPB) and Knowledge Hiding (b = -0.120, t = 3.428, p = 0.001) and between Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA) and Knowledge Hiding (b = -0.095, t = 2.375, p = 0.018), which supported H4 and H5. Nonetheless, Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP)/SA interaction did not show any significant relationship (b = -0.070, t = 1.667, p = 0.096), which did not support H6. Relational Transparency (RT) showed the important buffering effect on all dimensions of

Lastly, the Stone-Geisser Q<sup>2</sup> of Knowledge Hiding was 0.380 (Table 07). The model showed good predictive relevance of the endogenous construct, as Q<sup>2</sup> was not below zero [36].

**Table 7:** Q<sup>2</sup>

Endogenous Latent Variable	Q <sup>2</sup>
Knowledge Hiding	0.38

The immediate connections between the multiple dimensions of organizational political behavior and knowledge hiding were measured. Table 08 showed that the analysis demonstrated a significant positive impact of General Political Behavior (GPB) on knowledge hiding behavior (b = 0.285, t = 6.333, p < 0.001), thus confirming H1. On the same note, Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA) political behavior was also discovered to make a significant and positive contribution to knowledge hiding (b = 0.310, t = 6.458, p < 0.001), which supports H2. More so, Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP) have shown a strong positive influence on knowledge hiding behavior (b = 0.250, t = 6.250, p < 0.001), thereby proving H3. All these results together point in one way to the fact that the three different dimensions of perceived organizational political behavior are strong predictors of the higher levels of knowledge hiding among the faculty members of the university.

political behaviors, and the relationships between GPB (b = -0.140, t = 3.684, p = 0.001), GAGA (b = -0.115, t = 2.556, p = 0.011), and PPP (b = -0.100, t = 2.564, p = 0.011) and Knowledge Hiding were significant, which supported H7. On the same note, Internalized Moral Perspective (IMP) had a significant moderating effect on the impact of GPB (b = -0.130, t = 3.513, p < 0.001) and PPP (b = -0.125, t = 3.472, p < 0.001) on Knowledge Hiding in support of H10 and H12, respectively. The association between GAGA and IMP was, however, not significant (b = -0.080, t = 1.860, p = 0.063), and, therefore, H11 was not confirmed. Lastly, Balanced Processing (BP) reduced the positive impact of GPB on Knowledge Hiding (b = -0.105, t = 2.561, p = 0.011) by significant margin, which supports H13, and it also reduced the relationship between PPP and Knowledge Hiding (b = -0.110, t = 2.895, p = 0.004) by a significant margin, which supports H15. The correlation between GAGA and BP was

not significantly important ( $b = -0.075$ ,  $t = 1.630$ ,  $p = 0.103$ ), which did not support H14. All in all, the moderation analysis gives good evidence showing that various dimensions of Authentic Leadership- Self-awareness, Relational Transparency, Internalized Moral Perspective, and Balanced Processing- are

effective in buffering the positive association between organizational political behavior and knowledge hiding, but not all the hypothesized interactions were statistically significant.

**Table 9:** Moderation Structural paths

Hypothesis	Interaction Term (Moderating Effect)	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H4	GPB * Self-Awareness -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.12	0.035	3.428	0.001	Supported
H5	GAGA * Self-Awareness -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.095	0.04	2.375	0.018	Supported
H6	PPP * Self-Awareness -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.07	0.042	1.667	0.096	Not Supported
H7	GPB * Relational Transparency -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.14	0.038	3.684	<0.001	Supported
H8	GAGA * Relational Transparency -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.115	0.045	2.556	0.011	Supported
H9	PPP * Relational Transparency -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.1	0.039	2.564	0.011	Supported
H10	GPB * Internalized Moral Perspective -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.13	0.037	3.513	<0.001	Supported
H11	GAGA * Internalized Moral Perspective -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.08	0.043	1.86	0.063	Not Supported
H12	PPP * Internalized Moral Perspective -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.125	0.036	3.472	<0.001	Supported
H13	GPB * Balanced Processing -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.105	0.041	2.561	0.011	Supported
H14	GAGA * Balanced Processing -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.075	0.046	1.63	0.103	Not Supported
H15	PPP * Balanced Processing -> Knowledge Hiding	-0.11	0.038	2.895	0.004	Supported

## Discussion

The research aimed to examine the connection between organizational politics behavior and knowledge hiding among faculty members of a university and to determine the buffering effect of authentic leadership. The results provide meaningful information, and validating the harmful effect of perceived politics, it is shown that ethical leadership in academic institutions can have a positive ameliorating effect. As expected, the analysis of the direct effects indicated that all three dimensions of organizational political behavior, namely, General Political Behavior (GPB), Go Along to Get Ahead (GAGA), and Pay and Promotion Policies (PPP), significantly and positively predicted knowledge hiding. This finding is very much consistent with the principles of the Social Exchange Theory (SET), which indicates that the lack of the implicit reciprocity norm is breached in case faculty members believe that their academic environment is politicized and unjust<sup>[37]</sup>. This unfairness demotivates positive actions such as the sharing of knowledge, and instead encourages the defense mechanism, such as a deliberate attempt at hiding knowledge<sup>[3]</sup>. Moreover, these findings are also consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, whereby faculty who work in a highly politicized environment might consider their knowledge as a precious resource that can be lost or exploited. Such an environment makes people hoard or conceal intellectual capital to defend their professional status and future career due to the competition of resources, promotions, and recognition<sup>[7]</sup>. These results are in line with the earlier studies that have established the connection between workplace politics and other kinds of counterproductive work behavior as well as knowledge hiding in different organizational settings<sup>[2, 10]</sup>. The essence of this study is that it explains the buffering nature of authentic leadership dimensions. The product indicator approach to moderation analysis has also offered strong results that authentic leadership can have a substantial neutralizing effect on the positive association between organizational politics and knowledge hiding, but with specific interactions. The effect of Relational Transparency proved to be especially powerful, with the effect of all three dimensions of political behavior (GPB, GAGA, PPP) being substantially reduced. This implies that transparent leaders,

who have their intentions and reveal their personalities, can successfully reduce the uncertainty and mistrust that is usually created by organizational politics<sup>[19]</sup>. This kind of transparency promotes psychological safety and restores trust, which also makes the faculty less prone to conceal knowledge even in cases where the larger political gambit is perceived<sup>[38]</sup>. Likewise, Self-Awareness among leaders was also discovered to buffer the influence of both General Political Behavior and Go Along to Get Ahead on knowledge hiding to a great extent. Being self-aware, the leader will be better capable of building a predictable and trustworthy environment by being aware of their own values and influence, which will minimize the faculty having to resort to defensive hiding in the face of general political maneuvering or pressures to conform<sup>[39]</sup>. Internalized Moral Perspective was also useful in undermining the correlation between General Political Behavior and Knowledge Hiding, Pay and Promotion Policies, and Knowledge Hiding. Moral leaders with high internal ethical behaviors can create an impression of honesty and justice that offsets the cynicism and sense of injustice caused by reward systems based on politics<sup>[22]</sup>. This sense of right and wrong gives back a degree of fairness, reducing the desire of the faculty to conceal information due to revenge or the sense of injustice. Lastly, Balanced Processing played a very important role in calming down the impact of both General Political Behavior and Pay and Promotion Policies on knowledge hiding. Leaders who make decisions based on the objective analysis of all the information involved in making a decision, in particular in the distribution of resources and promotions, develop the image of procedural justice. This minimizes the risk to the resources and reputation of the faculty, hence minimizing the tendency of the faculty members to conceal knowledge<sup>[22]</sup>. The non-supported moderating effects should also be mentioned, as they are worth offering good boundary conditions to the effectiveness of authentic leadership. The relationship between Pay and Promotion Policies and Self-Awareness (H6) was not significant, which can be explained by the fact that, whereas self-understanding by a leader is crucial, it does not necessarily lead to the reduction of the perceptions of unfair external reward systems among the

faculty, as compared to such transparent behaviors as transparency or balanced decision-making. Equally, the insignificant moderation of Go Along to Get Ahead by Internalized Moral Perspective (H11) and Balanced Processing (H14) suggests that the special pressure to conform or fake agreement (GAGA) is possibly a strong-rooted survival mechanism in politics that even leaders driven by moral motives or driven by objectively processing cognition cannot completely overcome. The pressure of playing the game within a company to get a career advancement may be so intense that the authenticity of a leader, which is usually beneficial, cannot be fully upheld against this type of political pressure<sup>[40]</sup>. This makes the interplay between various types of political behavior and particular leadership qualities complex and indicates that not every dimension of authentic leadership is equally helpful in alleviating all varieties of political toxicity.

In a synthesis of these findings, this research contributes greatly to the theoretical knowledge on knowledge hiding in academia by establishing a multi-dimensional conceptual framework of authentic leadership incorporating both theories of SET and COR. It shows why resource protection by knowledge hiding is brought about by failure in social exchange relations predetermined by perceived political behavior. More importantly, it places genuine leadership as a critical tool in restoring such broken interactions and resource threats, which minimizes knowledge hiding. This understanding is further enhanced by multi-dimensional analysis, which showed that although various aspects of authentic leadership do work as effective buffers, they may have varying degrees of adherence to working or not, depending on the kind of organizational political behavior that is experienced. This subtle point of view adds depth to the theory of leadership and the body of literature on counterproductive work behavior, at least in the special context of higher education.

### Contributions

This research contributes a number of significant aspects to organizational behavior and higher education literature. To start with, it generalizes Social Exchange Theory (SET)<sup>[47]</sup> as well as Conservation of Resources (COR) theory<sup>[49]</sup> to the sphere of academic knowledge management. By showing that knowledge hiding is both a retaliatory reaction to broken social contracts (SET), and a strategic defense of status (COR), the study offers a two-theoretical account of the existence of faculty silos. Second, the research fulfills the request of more specific leadership research by breaking down the Authentic Leadership into four dimensions. Instead of viewing AL as a monolith, the given study separates the particular buffering value of such dimensions as Relational Transparency and Internalized Moral Perspective and provides a more accurate picture of the interaction between leadership and environmental stressors<sup>[52]</sup>. Third, by setting the study within the context of the Iraqi higher education sector, it contributes to the world knowledge base on knowledge hiding, confirming the constructs that have been developed in the West in a non-Western and post-conflict educational environment where scarce resources can enhance the politics.

As a manager, the results provide practical measures to the university administration and policymakers. The development of deans and department heads concerning the four dimensions of genuine leadership should be given a

priority in the training programs offered by the universities. Relational Transparency deserves special attention because this aspect demonstrated the greatest ability to counter political toxicity. The leaders should be trained to be open-minded when discussing decision-making processes to eliminate the uncertainty that drives political games. The close association of Pay and Promotion Policies with knowledge hiding indicates that universities need to audit their promotion policies carefully. The perception of favoritism can be minimized by moving towards clear, metric-based, and objective performance reviews, which, in turn, would minimize the incentive to conceal knowledge among the faculty. Administrators should be able to identify that the Go along to get ahead behaviors are symptomatic of a fearful climate. The interventions should aim at establishing psychological safety, whereby dissenting opinions are not penalized, but instead, the pressure to conform by force is broken, which promotes knowledge hiding.

### Conclusion

This paper aimed at unraveling the complicated relationship between organizational political behaviour and knowledge hiding in the academic industry, with authentic leadership as the most important intervention. The empirical data have clearly proven the assumption that perceived organizational politics is a very toxic stressor, which leads members of the faculty to hide knowledge as a defensive strategy to preserve their resources and to return the perceived injustice. Particularly, the faculties that perceive the world around them as manipulative, where non-meritocratic reward schemes are imposed and forced compliance (go along to get ahead) is the order of the day, the free flow of intellectual capital is stifled drastically.

Nevertheless, the paper offers a counter-story with a positive ending based on authentic leadership. The results affirm that the transparency-based, self-awareness-based, moral-viewpoint-based, and balanced-processing-based leadership behaviors can greatly interfere with the politics-to-hiding path. True leaders can prevent the toxicity of politics by cultivating a culture of trust and procedural justice that mitigates the adverse effects of political toxicity. Interestingly, the research points out that authentic leadership is a potent antidote, but its effects are not uniform with transparency with relation to others being a universally applicable buffer with other dimensions, such as self-awareness having more specific impacts. Finally, this study finds that organizational politics does not necessarily mean that knowledge exchange is doomed in higher education, but rather it can be greatly reduced through carefully nurturing the essence of genuine leadership.

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