

Unlocking the Secrets: Digging the Mystery of Rationalized Knowledge Hiding in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Rashid Khurshid ¹

Author's Affiliation:

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Institute of Business Management & Administrative Science.
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

Article History:

Submitted: November 09, 2023
Revised: March 17, 2024
Accepted: March 25, 2024
Published online: March 30, 2024

Corresponding author(s):

Rashid Khurshid
Rashid.khurshid@iub.edu.pk

A B S T R A C T

Purpose – Knowledge hiding has become a buzzword in developing countries, with the help of behavioral reasoning theory the key purpose of current research is to explore ‘reasons for’ behind the adoption of Rationalized Knowledge Hiding behavior by the top-level faculty members of higher education institutions.

Study Design/Methodology/Approach–Six in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the sample purposefully selected from one of the largest universities of lower south Punjab, Pakistan, to identify the top-level faculty member’s intentions behind the rationalized knowledge hiding. Findings - Based on thematic content analysis, the findings of current research revealed five majors ‘reasons for’ top-level individuals’ rationalized knowledge hiding in higher education institutions.

Practical Implications – Higher education institutions can use this qualitative research’s findings to understand the major reasons “for” top-level individuals’ rationalized knowledge hiding from their coworkers. Moreover, this study provides some constructive guidelines to higher education institutions and senior faculty members which can provide a brief understanding of rationalized knowledge hiding.

Study limitations – One of the major limitations is that the results of the research are not to be generalized to a large population. Second, this study utilized the purposeful convenient sampling method, so the research only gives highlights of rationalized knowledge hiding acceptance among academic faculty at the top level. Third, this study solely looks at behavioral patterns in the context of the south Punjab culture in Pakistan.

Originality/Novelty – To the best of the author's knowledge, no prior study has used a qualitative analysis to examine rationalized knowledge-hiding behavior in the setting of higher education institutions. In addition, this qualitative research revealed five major reasons “for” top-down rationalized knowledge hiding in HEIs by senior faculty and it is a great contribution to knowledge management literature.

Keywords: Knowledge Hiding, Rationalized Knowledge Hiding, Behavioral Reasoning Theory, Higher Education Institutes, Top-Down Faculty and Thematic Content Analysis.

JEL Classification: D80, D23

1 | INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is an asset for any organization ([Chughtai & Khan, 2023](#); [Zhang et al., 2022](#)) and effective knowledge management has a critical role in generating organizational-level innovation and firm performance ([Del Giudice et al., 2017](#); [Zutshi et al., 2021](#)) and allowing firms to gain a competitive advantage ([Arain et al., 2020](#); [Orlando et al., 2021](#)). Organizations have worked hard in the past to increase the amount of knowledge sharing, but the outcomes have not been noteworthy ([Haas & Park, 2010](#)). One significant factor impeding this is knowledge hiding (KH), which, despite its prevalence and detrimental impact on organizations ([Chughtai et al., 2022](#)), has not drawn much attention from scholars and practitioners ([Ladan et al., 2017](#)). Connelly et al. ([2012](#)) define knowledge hiding as "the deliberate concealment or hiding of task information, ideas, and techniques that have been requested by others." This concept has three dimensions: evasive knowledge hiding (EKH), playing dumb (PD), and rationalized knowledge hiding (RKH). According to Islam et al. ([2022](#)), some studies might treat KH as a whole; others likely differentiate between the three dimensions (EKH, PD, and RKH). According to Khoreva and Wechtler ([2020](#)), the findings of the investigation will differ in dimensions, so this qualitative study focused on the rationalized knowledge hiding (RKH) dimension rather than considering it as a whole because RKH considered less deceptive as compared to evasive hiding and playing dumb. Knowledge hiding can have a big effect and hurt people and organizations, so it is important to figure out the process and causes of KH ([Chughtai et al., 2022](#)). This understanding helps institutes intervene timely to stop it before it causes more problems ([Pan et al., 2018](#)).

The current study on the antecedent characteristics of RKH focuses on both personal reasons and organizational aspects in HEIs. According to the research of Cerne et al. ([2017](#)) and Zhang and Min ([2014](#)), knowledge hiding can have a detrimental impact on employee and team performance but on the other side rationalized knowledge hiding may have positive intentions or outcomes and it can be considered as "white lie". According to Saxe ([1991](#)) it may be intended to protect the feelings of others, or maybe protect the interest of third party or it could be done due to organizational confidentiality. Therefore, with the recommendations of Islam et al. ([2022](#)) and Connelly et al. ([2012](#)), for investigating purposes, researchers choose rationalized knowledge hiding which is a prominent dimension of knowledge hiding. As compared to playing dumb and evasive hiding, RKH gives more validity, minimum grounds for false rejections, and discourages distrust among coworkers ([Connelly & Zweig, 2015](#); [Islam et al., 2022](#)). According to Islam et al. ([2022](#)) adoption of rationalized knowledge hiding by knowledge providers does not lead to inner guilt or shame but the other two dimensions of knowledge hiding cause negative feelings among colleagues which are dangerous and damaging to both knowledge hidiers and seekers.

Despite the increased focus on employees' knowledge-sharing behaviors in various business settings, little is known about academicians' knowledge-hiding practices in academia ([Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023](#)). The major reason for universities' existence is to share knowledge ([Alm et al., 2022](#)). Numerous scholars found that although academics are disconnected from reality, practitioners are often reluctant to engage with academia ([Fauzi, 2023](#); [Ferreira et al., 2022](#)). Because HEIs are widely used for acquiring and disseminating knowledge, any attempt to hide or withhold knowledge is considered unlawful or immoral ([Chughtai et al., 2022](#)). Some organizations, however, encourage KH practices when their employees are unwilling to share knowledge, and because knowledge is intangible, there is little that can be done to prevent or stop KH ([Ferreira](#)

[et al., 2022](#)). While these studies do inform us on knowledge-hiding behaviors and their potential consequences between co-workers, the key intention about what are the major reasons “for”, rationalized knowledge hiding among senior teachers of HEIs whereas they hide the knowledge intentionally from their coworkers still needs to be revealed. There are reasons to suppose that an organization’s top employee may purposefully hide key knowledge from their superiors for personal advantages. For instance, to secure their positions, senior managers may suppress knowledge with an objective ([Butt, 2021](#)). Another research by Butt and Ahmad ([2019](#)) has indicated a need for a study to analyze individual-level characteristics, which push senior management to hide or conceal key information from their staff.

According to Pan et al. ([2018](#)), knowledge hiding has a serious impact or loss on individual perspective so it is necessary to understand the aims and process of knowledge hiding so that institute may take prompt actions to control. The current study on the goals of knowledge hiding has concentrated on these characteristics of individual variables, such as the senior teaching associates in HEIs ([Islam et al., 2022](#)). In addition, senior faculty members of HEIs are responsible for many key administrative posts and their decisions are impactful for their subordinates so in the viewpoint of RKH faculty members will demonstrate a higher wish for a win-win scenario at work and may unwittingly injure their colleagues, hence the partnerships may be naturally less harmonious ([Chughtai et al., 2022](#)). In addition, other dimensions of knowledge hiding like playing dumb and evasive hiding are more deceptive approaches and cause distrust and future retaliation among knowledge requester and knowledge provider ([Huo et al., 2016](#)). In this spirit, this study focuses on the intentions behind rationalized knowledge hidden by HEI’s senior faculty, so this study aims to unveil the key reasons “for” an individual’s RKH at personal, social, and organizational bases, which motivate senior faculty members of HEI’s to hide key information intentionally from their coworkers specifically in the university context. Therefore, to achieve the above-mentioned aim, the main research question of this qualitative study is what are the key reasons “for” an individual’s RKH in HEIs?

The majority of the prior studies have utilized behavioral theories and one of the most common theories is the social exchange theory ([Akhlaghimofrad & Farmanesh, 2021](#); [Nadeem et al., 2021](#)), social cognitive theory ([Bandura, 2001, 2002](#)), territorial behavior theory ([Li et al., 2021](#)), psychological ownership theory ([Wu & Liu, 2023](#)) and Theory of reasoned action ([Garg et al., 2021](#)) to examine KH behavior. All these theories look at a single perspective of knowledge hiding from either a Universalist or organizational perspective. However, by examining this research question, the study contributes to the literature, perhaps, the only study that responds to the call by Westaby ([2005](#)) regarding behavioral reasoning theory (BRT), as per behavioral reasoning theory, the attitude influences the intentions of individuals and reasons (‘for or ‘against’) also influence the individual attitude, moreover reasons “for” can also predict the major intentions. BRT unveiled the reason “for” of single RKH which motivates senior faculty members of HEIs. In addition, by exploring the senior faculty members of HEI’s RKH intention (Reasons for), our study fills this visible gap and adds knowledge to the existing literature so this work would be a valuable addition to the literature on knowledge hiding, which has either measured it incorrectly ([Zhang & Min, 2019](#)) or handled it as a single construct ([Arain et al., 2020](#); [Arain et al., 2020](#); [Černe et al., 2017](#)). Moreover, this study offers another novel contribution to the rationalized knowledge hiding literature like a study revealing the reasons “for” an

individual RKH, specifically those who are working at the top level in HEI, and this study also utilized the exploratory research design to unlock the justification mechanism behind the RKH behaviors in a developing country context. Therefore, this study aims to present a descriptive picture of the sorts of rationalized knowledge-hiding (RKH) behaviors revealed by senior teaching faculty of HEIs and as a result, this research can delve into the reasons “for” knowledge hiding among top-down employees of HEIs. Moreover, this study is of great value by examining the less studied sectorial (i.e. HEIs) and geographical context (i.e. Pakistan). Lastly, the practical contribution of this study is also important, and it gives many constructive guidelines to top-level faculty members of HEIs, which can give awareness regarding the rationalized KH phenomena within organizations.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge hiding was officially defined as ‘a purposeful effort by an individual to withhold or hide knowledge demanded by another person’ ([Connelly et al., 2012](#)). Knowledge Hiding has three dimensions ([Connelly et al., 2012](#)). First is evasive hiding, second, playing dumb, and third is Rationalized hiding. Evasive Hiding is the first dimension of knowledge hiding, which includes false, or misleading information as well as future promises to provide knowledge. [Hernaus et al. \(2019\)](#) Hernaus et al. ([2019](#)) argue that evasive hiding is the most dangerous form of hiding among academics because it allows for in-depth investigation. EH involves deception, which implies that the concealer delivers false information or makes a deceptive promise of a comprehensive response in the future, even if there is no purpose to provide it or no desire to postpone it unnecessarily ([Xia et al., 2022](#)). The second is “Playing Dumb,” which entails claiming to be oblivious to the knowledge needed by others, particularly superiors ([Demirkasimoglu, 2016](#)). On the other side, it shows some deceitful behavior and a lack of willingness to help, and this is an instance in which the one withholding information pretends not to understand the subject matter being discussed by the information seeker. “Rationalized Hiding” is the third dimension of knowledge hiding which entails the logic or rationalized thoughts behind the refusal to give the requested knowledge to someone ([Anand et al., 2020](#); [Arain et al., 2020](#); [Arain et al., 2021](#); [Ghani et al., 2020](#); [Hernaus et al., 2019](#)). According to Anand et al. ([2020](#)), the relationship can be strengthened between knowledge hidiers and requestors by the dimension of rationalized hiding. As other dimensions, in RKH it describes a situation in which the hider is justifying his inability to offer the required knowledge, either by stating that the hider is unable to do so or occasionally by placing the blame on another person ([Donate et al., 2022](#); [Karim, 2022](#); [Xiong et al., 2021](#)). Whereas lying is not always required ([Connelly & Zweig, 2015](#)).

Individuals who hide their knowledge may suffer unfavorable consequences. For example, Connelly et al. ([2015](#); [2012](#)) found that knowledge hiding between two coworkers reduces knowledge searchers' capacity to be creative and inventive. Whereas Peng ([2013](#)) found that a person hides knowledge when it is creative, or the knowledge is his insights. Moving on, Fong and Slotta ([2018](#)) suggested that information concealment affects not just people but also companies. They specifically stated that information concealing in organizations might result in increased turnover intentions among knowledge searchers. For example, Labafi ([2017](#)) from the information management field warned organizations that knowledge concealment is one of

the most significant barriers to innovation and can hurt employee productivity. Moreover, Mooradian et al. (2006) discovered that trust is a key component of information sharing, and its absence might indirectly induce individuals to participate in purposeful knowledge concealment in organizations. Similarly, Huo et al. (2016) discovered that trust acts as a mediator between psychological ownership and information-concealing behavior and that justice also adversely moderates the link between territoriality and knowledge hiding. They went on to say that interactive justice (a type of organizational justice) has a detrimental effect on the link between territoriality and justified or evasive concealing. Furthermore, whether managers hide knowledge or not is determined by the various leadership styles they possess (Chughtai et al., 2023). For example, a study discovered that extrovert managers act dumb with their coworkers, whereas neuroticism opposes such information concealment behavior (Fong & Slotta, 2018).

2.1 | Knowledge Hiding in HEIs

Higher education institutions in Pakistan play a crucial role in expanding research and skills in several sectors, including science and technology, engineering, medicine, and business innovation (Bashir et al., 2022; Marginson & Yang, 2022). According to a study by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, the higher education sector in Pakistan is responsible for producing roughly 90% of the country's research output and 75% of its PhD graduates (Abbas et al., 2022). In addition, despite the importance of higher education institutions in Pakistan, the sector confronts various obstacles (Iqbal et al., 2022). According to a World Bank assessment, the nation has one of the lowest rates of higher education enrolment in South Asia, with just 7% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 23 attending universities (Mundy & Menashy, 2012). To fully realize the potential of Pakistan's higher education sector, however, improvements in funding, research, and educational quality are required. In this regard, knowledge hiding is one of the strong barriers or unfavorable employee behavior (Zutshi et al., 2021). Academic faculty of Turkish universities found that the most often employed knowledge-hiding behavior of academics is “evasive hiding” (Demirkasimoglu, 2016). Another study suggests that academics are observed to participate in evasive concealment more than the other two PD and RKH (Hernaes et al., 2019). There is also data demonstrating academics are more inclined to play dumb in front of their superiors than their colleagues (Demirkasimoglu, 2016). Based on these references, it is plausible to say that the issue of knowledge hiding in academia is understudied. Because academics of HEIs are one of the key creators and suppliers of knowledge, it is vital to analyze how they respond when their coworkers and superiors seek necessary or valuable information from them (Oh et al., 2022).

3 | METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

3.1 | Ethical Considerations

The study obtained the data from HEIs, and experienced faculty members are gratefully acknowledged. Every stage of the study process adhered closely to ethical norms as the findings went against teachers' feelings and any disparaging remarks may damage a teacher's reputation. Faculty member interviews were accompanied by a safety net of services for interviewees.

3.2 | Sampling Procedures

Given the exploratory nature of the aim of this study, the study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate the key mechanism (i.e. reasons) behind the behavior of rationalized knowledge hiding among top-level teaching faculty of HEIs. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), purposeful sampling entails choosing particular individuals who can provide the required information. These people may be the only ones with it, or they may meet specific requirements the researcher has established, so in this study purposive sampling is used because the researcher focuses on understanding the intentions of a specific group, such as deans. In addition, to achieving the suitability for specific research objectives and gaining an in-depth understanding of phenomena this study utilized a purposeful sampling technique and selected a total of 14 top-level faculty members who are also working on a key administrative post (Deanship) in different faculties of one of the largest higher education institute of lower south Punjab, Pakistan and this university is the only university of lower south Punjab who have around 14 faculty and deans. The researcher chose the said population only because in the respective area of lower south Punjab education is only a key industry and in the education sector the major contribution performed by its university. In particular, the researcher selects the deans/professors because this study focuses on RKH and normally this dimension is performed by those personnel who have major authority over administrative decisions like deanship and parallel performed teaching in higher education institutes. Moreover, to get the key responses, the research paradigm selected the respondents in favor of the RKH so in the prescreening process only 08 respondents out of 14 were found to have defensive behavior for RKH. Given the fact of some busy schedules or professional issues, most of the respectable faculty members refused to give an interview. However, only 06 top-level faculty members out of 08 participated in the interview, yet an acceptable size sample (Creswell & Poth, 2016), and with the identification of the saturation point researcher gained the research adequacy level. KH or RKH is an evolving topic especially in the present case study so due to the complexity of the topic, in-depth inquiry, participant comfort and to achieve methodological rigor the duration of each interview was 35-45 minutes, and data was collected through notetaking because all officials objected to audio recording. Further, to ensure the research rigor, the author also fulfills the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Cypress, 2017). First, the objectives of the study were discussed with respondents, and then open-ended questions were asked related to the intention behind the RKH. At the end of each interview, several follow-up questions were asked to clarify the answers.

3.3 | Data Coding and Analysis

To improve a general interpretation of each respondent's response all interviews were transcribed precisely independently. In addition, constant comparative thematic analysis was employed to code the data, as well as common methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lochmiller, 2021; McAlearney, 2008; Radez et al., 2021). TCA (thematic content analysis) is a way of presenting qualitative data descriptively. Interview transcripts from study participants or other identifiable works that reflect experientially on the topic of investigation are examples of qualitative data. Several software tools are available to automate the labeling and classifying of texts, which is particularly advantageous for evaluating massive volumes of data. In this study, the study utilized the Microsoft Office programs (i.e. word and Excel) to aid our analysis.

The analysis of the data took several steps. First, all team members collectively and thoroughly read all transcripts and shared their understanding for better results. Second, after examining the transcript, researchers utilized the coding method ([Charmaz, 2006](#)). This was mainly focused on the fruitful aspect of respondent replies and developing a database on a spreadsheet. Once open coding was done the relevant theoretical category emerged with content analysis and was performed and ensured interlink-age between each category. Normally this method is known as axial coding, and it is also used to re-assemble the segregated data of open coding. To further understand the link between developing categories, the researcher used NVIVO 11 software. Third, the codes were converted into main groups and these groups were based on continuous comparisons to uncover similarities and differences between participants' points of view. Afterward, based on the conceptual group categories, the researcher categorized the overall themes that were labeled and revised many times. Lastly, the vigilant research team discussed all themes to reach a consensual list of themes as well as to develop a description of each theme.

4 | RESULTS and ANALYSIS

A total of 06 respondents were interviewed and all descriptive details of respondents are summarized in Table 1, in addition, NVivo has considerable potential and useful research tool in management sciences. It is advised that scholars, professionals, and instructors investigate how NVivo might enhance their work by more efficiently organizing and interpreting qualitative data, leading to a more profound understanding. In this research, NVivo was used for the analysis of qualitative findings and Figure 1 displays a word cloud that represents the word frequency of RKH.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of Study Respondents

Sr. #	ID	Gender	Education	Age	Position	Exp. in Years	Interview Time (appx)
1	P1	F	Ph.D.'s	51	Professor / Dean	20	45 minutes
2	P2	M	Ph.D.'s	57	Professor / Dean	22	35 minutes
3	P3	M	Ph.D.'s	55	Professor / Dean	23	40 minutes
4	P4	F	Ph.D.'s	56	Professor / Dean	19	39 minutes
5	P5	M	Ph.D.'s	52	Professor / Dean	16	45 minutes
6	P6	M	Ph.D.'s	56	Professor / Dean	17	35 minutes

4.1 | Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis aimed to understand the reasons why top-level faculty members engage in RKH within Pakistani HEIs. In terms of RKH, majorly five emerging themes were found from data analysis, and it helped us to understand why top-level faculty members are still convinced to adopt RKH. Interviewees generally acknowledged that while their workplace culture didn't promote rationalized knowledge hiding openly such behavior still occurred, as an interviewee (P3) revealed that "In our institute training centers are established to transfer the knowledge rather than to hold, for example, pedagogical training is the bright example of knowledge sharing among teachers".

Figure 1

Word Cloud of Rationalized Knowledge Hiding



From the collected data, in Table 2, the study identified five key reasons “for” of individual’s RKH (Figure 2). The thematic analysis concludes all interviewees' responses and all aggregate constructs influencing why top-level individuals of HEIs choose to rationalize knowledge hiding. In summary, we worked on creating appropriate categories throughout the first round of open coding. After further refining and linking the categories in axial coding, we used selective coding to restrict our coding process to the key themes exclusively, so the following are the key reasons “For” of individual’s RKH.

a. Time Constraints

Many of the interviewees (P2, P3, P5, and P6) revealed that an individual's reason for RKH is "Time Constraints", some of the interviewees told us that they hide the knowledge due to some personal limitation like time constraints, the response is "Yes, I do not share some of the information and this is a common practice in many places and it happened due to my busy schedule" (P2).

b. Confidentiality

The second key intention of an individual's rationalized knowledge hiding is “**Confidentiality**”, some of the interviewees (P1, P5, and P3) said in the interview that they hide knowledge only due to the secrecy of information and the comments, “*As an academic faculty member, I recognize the importance of knowledge*

confidentiality, but I also believe in fostering an environment that encourages transparency and due to this I hide some secret information from friends only due to rules and regulation” (P5).

“I selectively hide non-relevant information to focus on the current task or situation” (P3).

Table 2

Top-Down Reasons “FOR” Rationalized Knowledge Hiding among HEIs

Reasons “For”	Aggregate Dimension	2 nd Order Concept	1 st Order Concepts
	Time Constraints	- Professional Limitations	Yes, I do not share some information, and this is a common practice in many departments it happened due to my busy schedule.
	Confidentiality	-Knowledge Secrecy	I hide some secret information from friends and cliques only due to the rules and regulations and this is for my institute.
		-Irrelevancy	I selectively hide non-relevant information to focus on the current task or situation.
	Bounded Rationality	-Protection of intellectual property	Sometimes I choose to engage with KH due to less expertise or less funding and I hide it until I secured maximum resources or achieved a significant milestone in my research.
		- Competitive Advantage	If you want growth then you take hard decisions so many of us do not share our findings because it is very complex and unique.
	Team Skills Development	- Polish the Creativeness	Sometimes we have no option, and we hide some of the information only due to the requester’s benefits because if we told all then they never struggle.
	Institutional Lobbying	- Grouping for personal empowerment	We established a society to protect employee rights, so sometimes I cannot share the key information openly.

c. Bounded Rationality

In addition, another key reason “for” rationalized knowledge hiding is “**Bounded Rationality**”, some of the experienced employees (P1, P6, and P4) of HEI admit that they do not share some particular knowledge and that is only tacit type knowledge because it took a lot of effort and time.

“Sometimes I choose to engage with KH due to less expertise or less funding and I hide it until I secured maximum resources or achieved a significant milestone in my research” (P1).

“If you want growth then you make hard decisions so many of us do not share our findings because it is very complex and unique” (P6).

d. Team Skills Development

One of the key reasons “for” this is “**Team Skills Development**”, some of the interview respondents (P3, P5, and P6) replied that they are working in administrative posts and that is their responsibility that train newly joined employees so that’s why they hide some of the knowledge only due to enhance their creative team-based skills, following are the responses of respective interviewees,

“Sometimes we have no option, and we hide some of the information only due to requester’s benefits because if we told all then they never struggle” (P3).

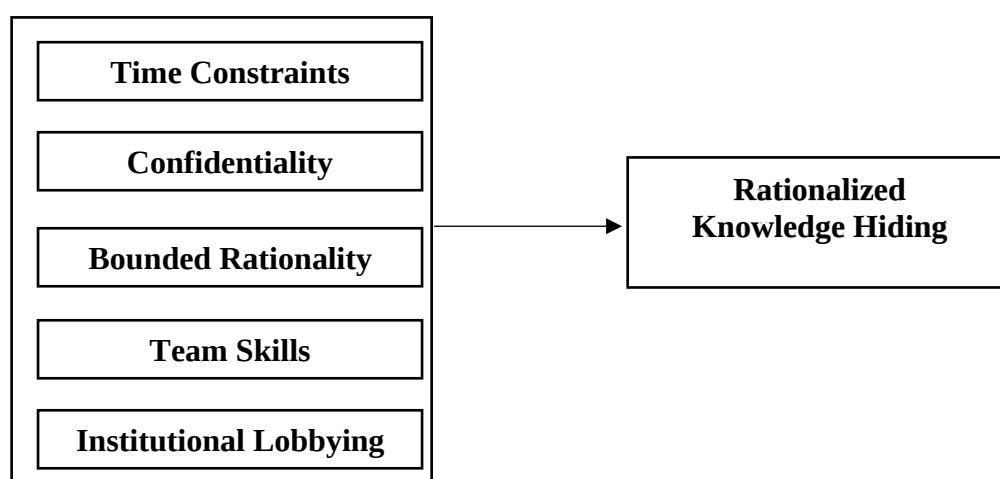
e. Institutional Lobbying

According to some of the mature respondents (P1, P2, and P4), one of the key reasons “for” knowledge hiding at their respective institutes is “**Institutional Lobbying**”. They believe that organizations with ample lobbying and group dynamics occur at multiple levels. In such environments, individuals may hide knowledge to protect the interests and well-being of their respective groups. Following are the key responses of interviewees,

“We establish a society to protect the employee rights, so sometimes I cannot share the key information openly” (P4).

Figure 2

Proposed Theoretical Framework of Rationalized Knowledge Hiding



5 | DISCUSSION

Although KH is common inside companies and has badly harmed organizations, it has not garnered much attention from researchers and managers. Knowledge sharing is a core aspect of teaching ([Karim, 2020](#)). However, what are the consequences when faculty members engage in RKH? Additionally, the system of HEIs faces many challenges to stimulating innovations and creativity among employee ([Titi, 2013](#)) there exists evidence indicating that academics demonstrate a greater propensity to “Playing Dump” in the presence of their superiors as opposed to their peers ([Demirkasimoglu, 2016](#)) and another one is that the academics are found to engage in evasive hiding more than the other two ([Hernaes et al., 2019](#)). In previous studies, the maximum variables of rationalized knowledge hiding focused on factors such as “lack of confidence”, “giving excuses” and “postponing the discussion” ([Kumar Jha & Varkkey, 2018](#)) and “Personality” ([Demirkasimoglu, 2016](#)) and no prior study has been inspected the major impact on top-down rationalized knowledge hiding (RKH) specifically in terms of reasons “for” based on behavioral reasoning theory ([Westaby, 2005](#)). Therefore, based on BRT our study constructed a qualitative study employed thematic analysis and informs us about five major reasons “for” of individual’s RKH in HEIs. The rationalization of the current study was derived from interviews conducted with 06 senior faculty members selected equitably from one of the largest Higher Education Institutions across the South Punjab Region of Pakistan. The findings collectively

underscored that RKH remains a nascent concept within Pakistan's higher education system and the major thematic construct is Time Constraints, maximum of the top-level employees are stuck in many administrative and academic activities so due to workload management or competing priorities as reasons for not responding promptly. Confidentiality (C) is one of the major justifications given by deans of HEIs in perspective of hiding knowledge; they assumed that all information is not for everyone like ACRs, promotions and transfer letters, critical research lab results in the field of agriculture, and the details of different ongoing projects by HEC, so we disseminate only the relevant information not all one. Bounded Rationality (BR) is when an individual decides without focusing on the rationale then at that time, that particular decision is satisfactory rather than optimal. In HEIs, sometimes situations are out of control and individuals have to wait for a good time to share valuable information with others, so they make a satisfactory decision rather than optimal and do not provide the key information to their colleagues ([Mustika et al., 2022](#)). Results show that this particular hiding is relevant to a tacit type of knowledge like special research findings because it took a lot of effort and time. team skills development (TSD), it's the duty of senior management to build up the skills of their subordinates if they are spoon-feeding then how they learn and grow in a competitive environment it is necessary to hide some of the information for their betterment. Top-level employees use it specifically to encourage individual independent thinking, enhance responsibilities and their problem-solving skills, increase their sense of ownership, and feel pride in their accomplishments. Last but not least is Institutional Lobbying (IL), there are multiple groups in some institutes and senior faculty members play a crucial role in these groups and they often serve as role models for their group members. Sometimes when they are a part of some productive group, they intentionally hide some important information from other group members and they justify this by saying that their group focuses only on protecting employee rights, such as safeguarding individual intellectual property, preventing exploitation, and mitigating discrimination rather than negative politics. Moreover, although there are strong justifications behind this RKH the awareness of RKH among academic faculty members across various tiers within the HEI framework remains incomplete.

5.1 | Implications of Theory and Practice

This study contributes an important theoretical contribution to the literature on the RKH intention of the Top-level HEIs. Studies on RKH intention in senior academics' faculty have rarely been acknowledged, thus our research is an attempt to discover the important reasons 'for' that offer the reasoning mechanism to the top-level faculty in their choice to RKH in Pakistani higher education institutions. The literature reveals that prior research has identified intentions and somehow reasons for RKH ([Wu & Liu, 2023](#); [Xiong et al., 2021](#)), but this research supports the BRT theory and answers those questions of how the intention of RKH fluctuations or established among HEI's top level teaching faculty. In addition, through the lens of behavioral reasoning theory (BRT), our study opens the doors for upcoming researchers so that they can further explore the faculty motivations for RKH in different contexts.

The outcomes of this study also serve as a guide for policy and practice. From the perspective of the RKH, the top-level faculty members want to follow the procedures and SOPs of knowledge management specifically in HEI, so this study is most helpful in managing the human resource and identifying the key reasons behind the HEI's top-level management (Deans) intentions of the RKH and the above justification

behind the RKH is also helpful for the middle or down line management. They can understand the reality behind the phenomena, and it could help avoid creating negative attitudes. This research endeavor not only offers valuable insights pertinent to Higher Education Institutions, but also contributes to the formulation of policy directives aimed at enhancing knowledge management practices. In addition, it addresses the imperative of effectively addressing the concerns of knowledge request senders and fostering their motivation to attain comprehensive comprehension of Rationalized Knowledge Hiding (RKH). Moreover, the findings of this research showed that there are some reasons “For” which have strong impacts on the behavioral intentions of HEI’s top-level faculty individuals.

5.2 | Future Research and Limitations

The study has some certain limitations, First, the findings of this research cannot be generalized all over the world because this study was conducted in a single university in Pakistan, so for a better underrating of the RKH intention among Top level faculty members of HEI’s, there is a need to conduct more studies in other geographical areas. Second, this study utilized the purposeful convenient sampling method, so the research only gives highlights of RKH acceptance among academic faculty (Deans) at the top level. Wu & Liu (2023) state that when a subordinate has a high degree of affective trust in you, they will believe that their boss should provide them with all the information they have asked for. However, in this scenario, the boss's RKH behavior may cause the subordinate to experience negative emotions, which could have an impact on his motivation and output. According to Anand et al. (2020), RKH strengthens the relationship between hidere and requesters. According to Connelly et al. (2012) and Hernaus et al. (2019), RKH is less deceptive as compared to PD and EH and also there is a difference among their drivers respectively. Therefore, this qualitative research in which the researcher observed the respondent's point of view about RKH intention but there is a need to establish a relationship among different variables of Reasons For through the statistical methods. Even though this study is very important to verify the truthfulness of respondent point of view, future researcher needs to apply some psychological methods like the cotinine test. Moreover, this study qualitatively identified the “reasons for” the RKH acceptance among HEI’s senior faculty members; however, there is a need for more clarity about those reasons that have a greater impact on accepting the RKH behavior on a larger sample using various research methodologies. Lastly, in the lens of BRT (behavioral reasoning theory), this study calls for more future research which opens the door to theoretical and practical debate specifically in the HEI’s context (Westaby, 2005).

5 | CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing understanding of the many variables that influence individuals' desire to perform the RKH by including elements from BRT theory. Through the examination of knowledge-hiding phenomena from the perspectives of knowledge-hiders, policymakers may enhance their strategies by incorporating a dyadic design involving eminent intellectuals and HEI leaders. Additionally, policymakers could direct their attention toward understanding the rationalized knowledge-hiding behaviors exhibited by leaders and subordinates, with particular emphasis on mechanisms like leader-member exchange. This technique offers an opening for greater study into the possible good implications of

reasoned information concealing, especially in instances where the persons involved occupy unique social and organizational roles.

Acknowledgment: The authors would like to express their sincere thanks to the editor and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, R.K.; methodology, R.K.; software, R.K.; validation, R.K.; investigation, R.K.; data curation, R.K.; writing—original draft preparation, R.K.; writing—review and editing, R.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest: The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Funding: The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement: Data that supports the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Plagiarism Statement: This article was scanned by the plagiarism program. No plagiarism was detected.

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