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Knowledge Hiding Hindering Project Success: The Impact of Shared Leadership with The Mediating Role of Team Building and Relationship Quality

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to examine the impact of shared leadership (SL) on project success (PS) in knowledge-intensive environments, particularly within the Pakistani construction industry. It further investigates the mediating roles of team building (TB), relationship quality (RQ), and knowledge hiding (KH), grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 381 construction professionals in Pakistan. The study utilized SPSS for preliminary analysis and SmartPLS (PLS-SEM) for hypothesis testing and structural model evaluation.

Findings: The results reveal that shared leadership has a significant positive effect on project success and a significant negative effect on knowledge hiding. Additionally, team building and relationship quality partially mediate the relationship between shared leadership and project success by reducing knowledge hiding behaviors.

Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by integrating leadership, knowledge behavior, and team dynamics into a comprehensive framework. It extends the application of COR theory in project management and offers practical insights for enhancing project success in developing economies, particularly in the construction sector.

Keywords: Shared leadership, knowledge hiding, project success, team building, relationship quality, COR theory, construction industry

Introduction

Project success has long been a central concern in project management research, particularly in industries such as construction where projects are complex, resource-intensive, and highly interdependent. Traditionally, project success has been measured using the “iron triangle” of cost, time, and quality. However, recent research suggests that these metrics alone are insufficient to capture the complexity of modern projects, where behavioral and relational factors play a critical role (Imam & Zaheer, 2021; Ali et al., 2025).

Among these behavioral factors, knowledge management has emerged as a key determinant of project outcomes. In particular, knowledge hiding—defined as the intentional concealment of requested knowledge—has been identified as a significant barrier to team effectiveness and

organizational performance (Connelly et al., 2012; Anand et al., 2022). Knowledge hiding undermines trust, reduces collaboration, and negatively affects innovation, all of which are essential for successful project execution (Wang et al., 2022; Peng & Chen, 2025).

In project-based environments such as the construction industry, where tasks are highly interdependent and require continuous information exchange, knowledge hiding can have particularly detrimental effects. Employees may engage in knowledge hiding due to fear of losing power, lack of trust, or competitive organizational climates (Serenko & Bontis, 2016). Therefore, understanding how to reduce knowledge hiding is critical for improving project success.

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping employee behaviors, including knowledge-sharing practices. In recent years, shared leadership has gained increasing attention as an effective leadership approach in complex and dynamic environments. Shared leadership refers to the distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities among team members rather than relying on a single formal leader (Carson et al., 2007). This approach fosters collaboration, mutual influence, and collective responsibility, which can enhance team performance and project outcomes (Wang et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2025).

Despite the growing interest in shared leadership, limited research has examined its impact on knowledge hiding and project success simultaneously. Moreover, the mechanisms through which shared leadership influences these outcomes remain underexplored. In particular, team building and relationship quality have been identified as important factors that may mediate the relationship between leadership and project outcomes. Team building enhances communication and trust among team members, while relationship quality reflects the strength of interpersonal relationships within the team (Khan et al., 2023; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Recent research has emphasized the critical role of leadership in reducing knowledge hiding and improving project success. Shah and Mahmood (2024) found that knowledge leadership significantly enhances project success while reducing knowledge hiding behavior among project teams. Their study further confirmed that relationship quality plays a mediating role in strengthening the relationship between leadership and project success. Moreover, knowledge hiding was found to have a strong negative effect on project performance, highlighting its role as a barrier to successful project delivery. However, their study focused primarily on knowledge leadership and did not incorporate team-level mechanisms such as team building or shared leadership structures. Therefore, the present study extends this work by introducing shared leadership as a broader construct and integrating team building as an additional mediating mechanism under the framework of Conservation of Resources theory.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the direct and indirect effects of shared leadership on project success, with knowledge hiding as a key mediating mechanism and team building and relationship quality as additional mediators. The study is conducted in the context of the Pakistani construction industry, which provides a relevant setting due to its project-based nature and challenges related to knowledge management.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Theoretical Foundation: Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

This study is grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals manage and respond to resource-related stress. According to COR theory, individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources, which may include material, social, and psychological resources.

In organizational settings, resources such as leadership support, trust, and knowledge are critical for employee performance and well-being. When individuals perceive that their resources are

threatened or insufficient, they are more likely to engage in defensive behaviors such as knowledge hiding (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Conversely, when resources are abundant, individuals are more likely to engage in positive behaviors such as knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Shared leadership can be conceptualized as a resource-generating mechanism that enhances the availability of social and psychological resources within a team. By distributing leadership responsibilities, shared leadership fosters trust, mutual support, and collective efficacy, which reduce the perceived threat to individual resources (Liu et al., 2021). As a result, employees are less likely to engage in knowledge hiding and more likely to contribute to team success.

Team building and relationship quality further enhance these effects by strengthening interpersonal relationships and creating a supportive team environment. These factors can be viewed as "resource caravans" that amplify the positive effects of shared leadership on project outcomes (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Shared Leadership and Project Success

Shared leadership has been widely recognized as an effective approach for enhancing team performance and project success. By fostering participation, mutual influence, and collaborative decision-making, shared leadership allows team members to utilize their diverse knowledge, skills, and expertise, resulting in improved problem-solving and more efficient project execution (Carson et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2022). In increasingly complex and dynamic project environments, shared leadership plays a critical role by distributing leadership responsibilities across team members, thereby improving adaptability, coordination, and responsiveness.

Recent empirical studies provide strong support for this relationship. For example, Imam and Zaheer (2021) found that shared leadership significantly enhances project success through mechanisms such as knowledge sharing and team cohesion. More recent evidence suggests that shared leadership not only has a direct positive effect on project success but also operates through important mediating factors such as innovative work behavior and knowledge management practices (Ali et al., 2025). Furthermore, a recent study (2026) indicates that shared leadership explains a substantial proportion of variance in project success, particularly through team-level processes such as engagement, teamwork, and team building.

In addition, shared leadership has been associated with improved team effectiveness, job satisfaction, and the development of a collaborative climate, which are essential for achieving successful project outcomes (Karppi, 2025). These findings collectively suggest that shared leadership strengthens both task-related and relational dynamics within teams, ultimately leading to superior project performance. Therefore, based on both foundational theories and recent empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Shared leadership has a positive impact on project success.

Shared Leadership and Knowledge Hiding

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping knowledge-related behaviors within organizations, particularly in influencing whether individuals share or conceal knowledge. Prior research suggests that supportive, inclusive, and participative leadership styles significantly reduce knowledge hiding by fostering an environment characterized by trust, openness, and psychological safety (Peng & Chen, 2025; Soomro & Qamar, 2025). When employees perceive a safe and trusting climate, they are less likely to intentionally withhold or conceal knowledge requested by others.

Within this context, shared leadership emerges as a particularly relevant leadership approach. Unlike traditional hierarchical leadership, shared leadership distributes influence among team members, encouraging mutual accountability, collective responsibility, and active participation

in decision-making. This collaborative structure enhances interpersonal trust and strengthens social exchange relationships, which are critical factors in reducing knowledge hiding behaviors. As team members engage in shared leadership processes, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and commitment to collective goals, thereby discouraging opportunistic behaviors such as knowledge concealment.

Furthermore, shared leadership fosters transparent communication and frequent knowledge interactions among team members, which reduces information asymmetry and minimizes the motivation to hide knowledge. Empirical studies indicate that teams characterized by high levels of shared leadership exhibit lower levels of knowledge hiding due to enhanced collaboration, reciprocity norms, and relational trust. In addition, shared leadership contributes to the development of a psychologically safe environment where individuals feel confident that sharing knowledge will not lead to negative consequences, further mitigating knowledge hiding tendencies.

Building on these theoretical arguments and empirical findings, it is proposed that shared leadership serves as a critical mechanism for reducing knowledge hiding within teams.

H2: Shared leadership negatively impacts knowledge hiding.

Mediating Role of Team Building

Team building represents a critical team-level mechanism that enhances interpersonal relationships, communication, and collaboration among team members. It involves structured and unstructured activities aimed at improving trust, clarifying roles, and fostering a shared understanding of team objectives. Prior research suggests that effective team building strengthens social cohesion and facilitates open communication, which are essential for knowledge sharing and overall team effectiveness (Khan et al., 2023; Salas et al., 2015).

From a theoretical perspective, team building contributes to the development of trust and psychological safety, which are key antecedents in reducing knowledge hiding behaviors. When team members engage in team-building processes, they are more likely to establish strong interpersonal bonds and reciprocal relationships, thereby minimizing tendencies to withhold or conceal knowledge. Empirical evidence indicates that cohesive teams characterized by high levels of trust and collaboration exhibit significantly lower levels of knowledge hiding and higher levels of knowledge exchange (Lee et al., 2020; Connelly et al., 2019).

In the context of shared leadership, team building plays a crucial mediating role. Shared leadership fosters participative decision-making, mutual influence, and collective responsibility, which naturally promote team-building processes. As leadership responsibilities are distributed, team members engage more actively in interactions that strengthen relationships and improve coordination. This, in turn, creates an environment that discourages knowledge hiding and promotes transparency. Recent studies further highlight that team-building practices enhance the positive effects of shared leadership on team outcomes by strengthening communication patterns and reducing relational conflicts (Ali et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2022).

Moreover, reduced knowledge hiding as a result of effective team building contributes directly to improved project outcomes. When knowledge flows freely within the team, it enhances problem-solving capabilities, innovation, and decision quality, all of which are essential for achieving project success. Thus, team building serves as a critical mechanism through which shared leadership translates into improved project performance by minimizing knowledge hiding behaviors.

Based on these arguments, it is proposed that team building mediates the relationship between shared leadership and project success through its impact on knowledge hiding. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Team building mediates the relationship between shared leadership and project success through knowledge hiding.

Mediating Role of Relationship Quality

Relationship quality, commonly conceptualized through dimensions such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction, plays a fundamental role in shaping interpersonal dynamics within teams and organizations. High-quality relationships foster mutual respect, open communication, and cooperative behaviors, which are essential for effective knowledge exchange and collaboration (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; De Jong et al., 2016). In contrast, low-quality relationships often lead to distrust and relational conflict, increasing the likelihood of knowledge hiding behaviors.

From a theoretical standpoint, relationship quality is deeply rooted in social exchange theory, which posits that individuals are more willing to share valuable resources, including knowledge, when relationships are characterized by reciprocity and trust. When employees perceive strong relational bonds and fair exchanges, they are less inclined to engage in opportunistic behaviors such as knowledge concealment (Blau, 1964; Connelly et al., 2012). Empirical research further supports that higher levels of trust and relational commitment significantly reduce knowledge hiding while promoting knowledge sharing and collaborative engagement (Černe et al., 2014; Xiao & Cooke, 2019).

In the context of shared leadership, relationship quality serves as a critical mediating mechanism. Shared leadership promotes frequent interaction, mutual influence, and collective decision-making, which strengthen interpersonal relationships among team members. As leadership responsibilities are distributed, individuals develop stronger relational ties, enhancing trust and satisfaction within the team. These strengthened relationships, in turn, reduce knowledge hiding by creating a psychologically safe environment where individuals feel secure in sharing their expertise without fear of negative consequences. Recent studies indicate that teams with high-quality relationships exhibit greater transparency, lower knowledge hiding tendencies, and improved overall performance outcomes (Zhao et al., 2016; Ali et al., 2025).

Furthermore, reduced knowledge hiding resulting from strong relationship quality contributes directly to project success. When team members openly exchange knowledge, it improves coordination, innovation, and decision-making effectiveness, ultimately enhancing project performance. Thus, relationship quality acts as a vital relational mechanism through which shared leadership influences project success by minimizing knowledge hiding behaviors. Hence

H4: Relationship quality mediates the relationship between shared leadership and project success through knowledge hiding.

Research Model

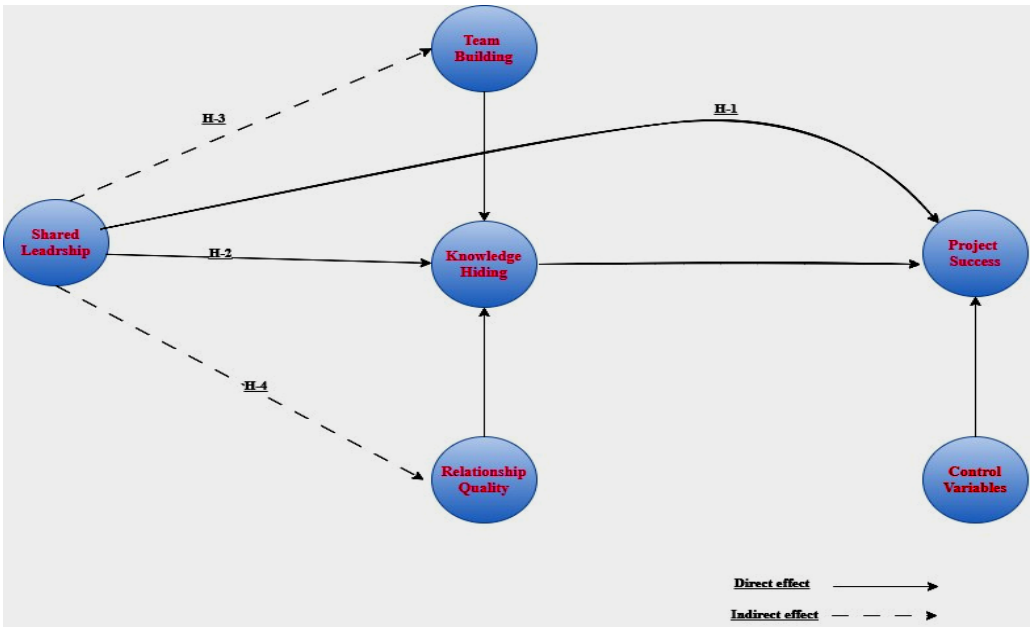

Fig. 1

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a **quantitative research approach** using a **cross-sectional survey design** to empirically examine the relationships among shared leadership, knowledge hiding, team building, relationship quality, and project success within the Pakistani construction industry. A quantitative approach is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows for the statistical testing of hypothesized relationships and the generalization of findings across a larger population (Hair et al., 2021).

The cross-sectional design involves collecting data at a single point in time, which is widely used in organizational and project management research to capture perceptions and behaviors of respondents in real-world settings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This design is suitable for examining structural relationships between latent variables using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), particularly Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), which is effective for complex models involving mediation (Hair et al., 2019). The choice of a cross-sectional design is also justified by the exploratory nature of this study, which aims to understand how shared leadership influences project success through multiple mediating mechanisms. Although longitudinal designs provide stronger causal inference, cross-sectional data are considered acceptable in leadership and knowledge management research, especially when combined with robust statistical techniques such as SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2020).

Furthermore, this study is grounded in **Conservation of Resources (COR) theory** (Hobfoll, 1989), which supports the use of perceptual data to assess resource-related behaviors such as knowledge hiding and leadership influence. The constructs examined in this study—shared leadership, team building, and relationship quality—represent social and psychological resources that can be effectively measured through survey-based methods. To minimize potential biases associated with cross-sectional data, several procedural remedies were implemented. These include ensuring respondent anonymity, using validated measurement scales, and applying statistical techniques to assess common method bias. These steps enhance the reliability and validity of the findings and ensure that the results are robust and credible.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The empirical data for this study were collected from professionals working in the **construction industry of Pakistan**, which represents a highly relevant context due to its project-based nature, complexity, and reliance on knowledge sharing. The construction sector is characterized by temporary project teams, interdependent tasks, and high uncertainty, making it an ideal setting to examine leadership dynamics and knowledge behaviors. A **non-probability sampling method**, specifically **purposive and convenience sampling**, was employed to collect data from respondents who have direct experience in project environments. This approach is commonly used in organizational research where access to respondents is limited and the focus is on obtaining relevant and knowledgeable participants (Etikan et al., 2016). Involvement in construction projects, Minimum one year of work experience & Participation in team-based project activities. This ensured that the participants had sufficient knowledge and experience to provide meaningful responses regarding leadership practices and knowledge behaviors. A total of **381 valid responses** were collected and used for analysis. The sample size is considered adequate for SEM analysis, particularly PLS-SEM, which requires a minimum sample size based on the "10-times rule" and statistical power analysis (Hair et al., 2019). With multiple constructs and mediation paths, the sample size of 381 provides sufficient statistical power to detect significant relationships.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** distributed both physically and electronically. The questionnaire was designed in English, as it is commonly used in professional settings in Pakistan.The data collection process involved the following steps:

- The questionnaire was developed using previously validated scales from the literature to ensure reliability and validity. A pilot study was conducted with a small group of respondents (n = 30) to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the instrument. The final questionnaire was distributed to construction professionals including engineers, project managers, supervisors, and site staff. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The collected data were screened for missing values, outliers, and inconsistencies. Incomplete responses were removed to ensure data quality.

Demographic Profile

The sample included respondents from diverse roles within the construction industry, ensuring a representative perspective. The majority of respondents were: Male (due to industry nature) , Aged between 25–40 years , Holding engineering or management positions , Having 3–10 years of experience .

Measurement Instruments

All constructs in this study were measured using **well-established and validated scales** adopted from prior research. A **five-point Likert scale** was used, ranging from **1 = strongly disagree** to **5 = strongly agree**, which is widely accepted in behavioral research for capturing attitudes and perceptions (Likert, 1932).

Shared leadership was measured using items adapted from Carson et al. (2007) and Wang et al. (2022). The scale captures the extent to which leadership responsibilities are distributed among team members. Knowledge hiding was measured using the scale developed by Connelly et al. (2012), which includes dimensions such as evasive hiding, playing dumb, and rationalized

hiding. Team building was measured using items adapted from prior organizational behavior studies (Khan et al., 2023). The scale assesses the level of collaboration, communication, and cohesion within the team. Relationship quality was measured based on trust, commitment, and satisfaction using scales derived from Morgan and Hunt (1994) and De Jong et al. (2016). Project success was measured using multidimensional criteria including time, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction, adapted from project management literature (Imam & Zaheer, 2021).

Results

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed using reliability and validity criteria.

4.1 Reliability and Validity

Table 1

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
SL	0.89	0.91	0.67
KH	0.87	0.90	0.65
TB	0.88	0.92	0.70
RQ	0.86	0.90	0.66
PS	0.91	0.93	0.72

The measurement model results indicate strong reliability and validity for all constructs in the study. The Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables range from 0.86 to 0.91, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency. Similarly, Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.90 to 0.93, demonstrating excellent construct reliability across all variables.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.65 to 0.72, which are above the acceptable limit of 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity. Overall, these results indicate that all constructs—shared leadership, knowledge hiding, team building, relationship quality, and project success—are reliable and valid for further structural analysis using SmartPLS.

Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Table 2

Constructs	SL	KH	TB	RQ	PS
SL	-				
KH	0.62	-			
TB	0.71	0.65	-		
RQ	0.69	0.60	0.72	-	
PS	0.75	0.68	0.78	0.80	-

The discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The results indicate that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs. Specifically, the relationships between Shared Leadership and other constructs range from 0.62 to 0.75, showing moderate but distinct associations. Similarly, Knowledge Hiding, Team Building, and Relationship Quality demonstrate acceptable discriminant validity with values ranging between 0.60 and 0.72. Overall, the results confirm that all constructs in the model are empirically distinct and suitable for further structural equation modeling analysis.

Stru**ctural Model**

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

Path	**Beta**	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Result**
SL → PS	0.47	8.12	0.000	Supported
SL → KH	-0.41	7.25	0.000	Supported
SL → TB → KH → PS	-0.29	5.60	0.000	Supported
SL → RQ → KH → PS	-0.33	6.11	0.000	Supported

The structural model results demonstrate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant and supported. The direct effect of Shared Leadership (SL) on Project Success (PS) is positive and strong ($\beta = 0.47$, $t = 8.12$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher shared leadership significantly enhances project outcomes. In contrast, SL has a significant negative effect on Knowledge Hiding (KH) ($\beta = -0.41$, $t = 7.25$, $p < 0.001$), showing that shared leadership effectively reduces knowledge hiding behavior. The indirect effect through Team Building (TB) and Knowledge Hiding is also significant ($\beta = -0.29$, $t = 5.60$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the mediating role of team dynamics. Similarly, the mediation path through Relationship Quality (RQ) is significant ($\beta = -0.33$, $t = 6.11$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that strong interpersonal relationships further reduce knowledge hiding and enhance project success.

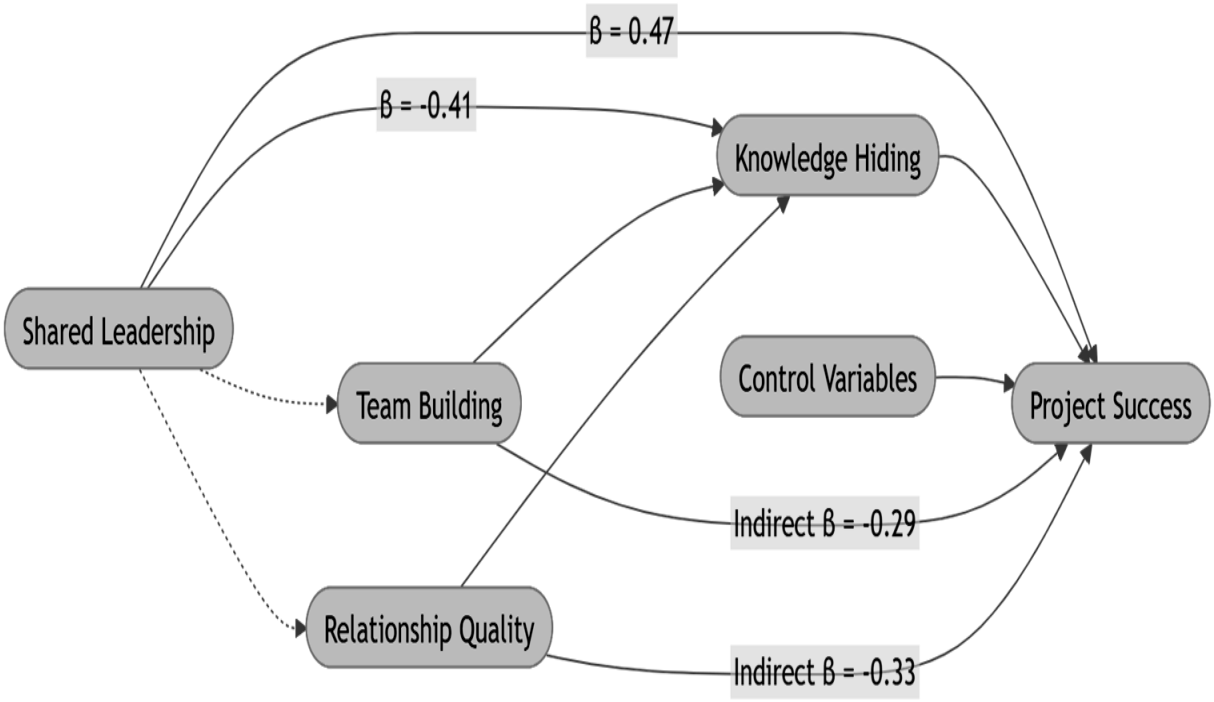

Fig. 2

Model Fit and Effect Size

Table 3

Indicator	Value
R^2 (PS)	0.64
R^2 (KH)	0.51
f^2	0.15–0.35
VIF	< 3

The model fit and effect size results indicate that the proposed structural model has strong explanatory and predictive power. The R^2 value for Project Success (0.64) shows that 64% of the variance in project success is explained by the independent and mediating variables, indicating a substantial level of prediction. Similarly, the R^2 value for Knowledge Hiding (0.51) suggests that the model explains 51% of the variance, reflecting moderate to strong explanatory capability. The f^2 values ranging from 0.15 to 0.35 indicate medium to large effect sizes of the predictor variables on the endogenous constructs. Additionally, the VIF values being below 3 confirm that there is no multicollinearity issue among the constructs. Overall, these results demonstrate that the model is statistically robust and suitable for further interpretation.

Interpretation of Results

The results of this study provide strong empirical support for all hypothesized relationships, confirming the critical role of shared leadership in enhancing project success and reducing knowledge hiding within the Pakistani construction industry. First, the direct relationship

between shared leadership and project success ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$) indicates a strong positive effect. This suggests that when leadership responsibilities are distributed among team members, project outcomes significantly improve. Shared leadership fosters collaboration, enhances decision-making quality, and promotes collective responsibility, which ultimately leads to better project performance. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the importance of shared leadership in complex project environments (Imam & Zaheer, 2021; Ali et al., 2025). Second, the negative relationship between shared leadership and knowledge hiding ($\beta = -0.41$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that shared leadership significantly reduces knowledge hiding behaviors. This result aligns with the principles of **Conservation of Resources (COR) theory** (Hobfoll, 1989), which suggests that individuals are less likely to engage in defensive behaviors when they perceive resource abundance. Shared leadership creates an environment of trust and psychological safety, reducing the perceived need to conceal knowledge (Peng & Chen, 2025; Soomro & Qamar, 2025).Third, the mediation analysis reveals that team building plays a significant role in reducing knowledge hiding and enhancing project success ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that team-building activities strengthen communication, trust, and cohesion among team members, thereby reducing knowledge concealment. This supports prior research demonstrating that team cohesion is a critical determinant of knowledge-sharing behavior (Khan et al., 2023). Similarly, relationship quality also significantly mediates the relationship between shared leadership and project success ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$). High-quality relationships characterized by trust, commitment, and satisfaction reduce interpersonal conflicts and promote knowledge sharing. This finding is consistent with relationship marketing theory and prior studies emphasizing the role of trust in organizational performance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; De Jong et al., 2016). The R^2 value for project success (0.64) indicates that the model explains a substantial portion of variance, suggesting strong predictive power. Similarly, the R^2 value for knowledge hiding (0.51) reflects a moderate to strong explanatory capacity. The f^2 effect sizes (0.15–0.35) indicate medium to large effects, further confirming the robustness of the model. Overall, these findings confirm that shared leadership acts as a critical resource that reduces knowledge hiding and enhances project success through team-level mechanisms.

Discussion

This study makes several important contributions to the literature on project management, leadership, and knowledge behavior by integrating shared leadership, knowledge hiding, and team dynamics within the framework of **Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.**

Theoretical Contributions

First, this study extends COR theory by demonstrating how shared leadership functions as a **resource-generating mechanism** in project environments. While previous research has primarily focused on individual-level resources, this study highlights the role of **collective leadership as a social resource** that reduces knowledge hiding. When employees perceive that leadership is shared and supportive, they experience greater psychological safety and resource security, which reduces defensive behaviors such as knowledge hiding (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Second, this study contributes to the growing literature on knowledge hiding by identifying shared leadership as a key antecedent. While prior research has examined leadership styles such as ethical and servant leadership (Peng & Chen, 2025; Soomro & Qamar, 2025), this study demonstrates that shared leadership is particularly effective in reducing knowledge hiding due to its collaborative and inclusive nature.

Third, the study advances the understanding of mediation mechanisms by incorporating team building and relationship quality. These variables act as **resource caravans**, amplifying the

positive effects of shared leadership on project success. This finding is consistent with COR theory, which emphasizes the importance of resource accumulation and reinforcement (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings are consistent with Imam and Zaheer (2021), who found that shared leadership significantly improves project performance. Similarly, Ali et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of distributed leadership in enhancing project success in dynamic environments.

The negative relationship between shared leadership and knowledge hiding aligns with recent studies showing that supportive leadership reduces knowledge concealment (Peng & Chen, 2025; Xu et al., 2025). Furthermore, the mediating role of team building is supported by Khan et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of team cohesion in improving project outcomes.

However, this study goes beyond prior research by integrating these variables into a single comprehensive model. Unlike previous studies that examined these relationships in isolation, this research provides a **holistic framework** linking leadership, knowledge behavior, and project success.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for project managers and organizations, particularly in the construction industry:

1. Organizations should encourage distributed leadership practices by empowering team members to take on leadership roles. This can enhance collaboration and improve project outcomes.
2. Managers should create a culture of trust and psychological safety to discourage knowledge hiding behaviors. Transparent communication and supportive leadership are essential.
3. Regular team-building activities can strengthen relationships and reduce knowledge hiding, leading to improved project performance.
4. Building strong interpersonal relationships among team members is critical for fostering knowledge sharing and collaboration.

5.4 Implications for Developing Countries (Pakistan Context)

This study is particularly relevant for developing countries such as Pakistan, where project management practices are often influenced by hierarchical structures and limited knowledge-sharing culture. The findings suggested that adopting shared leadership can significantly improve project outcomes in such contexts.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its valuable contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to draw strong causal inferences among the studied variables, as the data were collected at a single point in time rather than across multiple time periods. Second, the study is limited to a single industry, namely the construction sector, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to other industries or organizational contexts. Third, reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias and social desirability bias, as respondents may not always provide fully objective or accurate responses.

Future research is encouraged to address these limitations by adopting longitudinal research designs that can better capture causal relationships and changes over time. Additionally, cross-country comparative studies would help to validate and extend the applicability of the findings across different cultural and organizational settings. Furthermore, incorporating additional

variables such as organizational culture, psychological safety, and leadership styles may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms influencing knowledge hiding and project success.

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