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Performance Pressure Effect on Knowledge Hiding: A Perspective of Chinese Education Culture

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Abstract: Knowledge sharing is a critical aspect of information and communication interactions and significantly influences teacher performance. In the context of Chinese academia, cultural values such as collectivism, respect for hierarchy, and social harmony shape knowledge sharing among teachers. This study investigates how performance pressure affects teacher knowledge hiding, with a psychological contract breach as a mediator and teacher psychological resilience as a moderator. Four hundred twenty university teachers across 14 cities in Guangxi, China, a region known for its ethnic diversity and rapid educational development, filled out the questionnaire. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the proposed research hypotheses. The results show that performance pressure significantly increases psychological contract breach and knowledge hiding. Additionally, psychological contract breach partially mediates the relationship between performance pressure and knowledge hiding. Psychological resilience moderates the effects of teachers' performance pressure on psychological resilience and knowledge hiding. These results confirm that teachers' performance pressure from school management is critical to both psychological well-being and knowledge exchange behavior. In the Chinese cultural context, values such as group cohesion help facilitate knowledge sharing among teachers and reduce the tendency toward knowledge hiding.

Keywords: knowledge hiding, performance pressure, psychological contract breach, psychological resilience, Chinese university culture

Globally, the rise of remote and hybrid work, accelerated by advances in digital collaboration platforms, has further complicated knowledge sharing (Junaidi et al., 2026; Matikainen et al., 2023). Such work leads to competition among teachers and pressure to meet organizational goals (Restrepo-Gil et al., 2024; Zhang & Wang, 2021). These workplace dynamics have become key influences on teachers' psychological well-being and knowledge exchange behavior. Some teachers may engage in emotion-driven knowledge exchange to maintain competitive advantages, while others may become more guarded, especially when individual recognition and performance metrics are emphasized. However, cultural values such

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as collectivism, the importance of group harmony, and respect for hierarchical structures continue to shape teachers' approaches to knowledge sharing and hiding in Chinese higher education (Liu, 2023; Thohir et al., 2026; Wang, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). This shift is particularly evident in the wake of technological development, which has pushed educational institutions to adopt remote and blended teaching models. At the same time, knowledge sharing remains crucial for supporting teachers' research innovation, teaching quality, and institutional development.

The rapidly changing academic landscape, with increased digitalization, shifting work modalities, and heightened expectations, may lead teachers to feel that institutional promises go unfulfilled (AlGhaithy & Al-Busaidi, 2025; Thohir et al., 2026). This feeling can lead to inconsistent application of evaluation standards, increasing the risk of psychological contract breach. Psychological resilience acts as a critical buffer in this setting, enabling teachers to manage stress and sustain knowledge sharing under academic pressure (Chen & Lee, 2022; Li et al., 2026). The need for strong interpersonal trust and support systems within organizations grows as remote and hybrid work expands. Therefore, organizations must intentionally cultivate a culture of collaboration that fosters open communication and teamwork, while remaining sensitive to local cultural norms. This involves establishing clear procedures, ensuring transparent decision-making, and prioritizing support for teachers' psychological well-being. Organizational culture and the perceived fairness of processes play an important role in influencing psychological contract breach, which mediates the impact of performance pressure on knowledge hiding.

Knowledge hiding remains a significant issue both in China and globally, with far-reaching consequences for organizational effectiveness and innovation (Wen & Ma, 2021; Yao et al., 2023). Bari et al. (2020) reported that 76% of knowledge workers had engaged in knowledge hiding, while 60% reported difficulties accessing vital information from colleagues (Poomkornsan et al., 2026). In educational settings where digital communication and remote work are increasingly common, knowledge hiding can take subtle forms, such as withholding resources or not sharing insights during virtual meetings. This behavior can escalate into conflicts and disagreements, ultimately damaging team relationships (Bratianu et al., 2023; Lai et al., 2024). Despite the prevalence and harmful effects of knowledge hiding, much of the prior research has focused on positive organizational attitudes and behaviors such as organizational justice and commitment (AlGhaithy & Al-Busaidi, 2025). The underlying drivers of knowledge hiding in contemporary work environments (Fauzi, 2023; Liu et al., 2026). Therefore, investigating the effects of performance pressure and teachers' psychological factors that contribute to knowledge hiding is increasingly crucial for reducing its destructive impacts, especially as workplace dynamics evolve. Understanding these antecedents (performance pressure, psychological contract breach, and resilience) is essential for developing interventions that foster open knowledge sharing and sustainable academic collaboration within culturally specific institutional environments.

The research emphasizes that understanding psychological resilience and the impact of performance pressure is essential within this specific cultural context to develop effective strategies to reduce knowledge hiding. The study offers a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge hiding in educational environments, particularly in regions where cultural norms, informal networks, and performance expectations converge. Psychological resilience is a critical factor that can influence how teachers experience performance pressure and psychological contract breaches, providing credible support for sustaining effective knowledge sharing. However, universities' specific role in actively facilitating and incentivizing knowledge exchange among teachers remains ambiguous (Kurniawanti et al., 2023; Nauman et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2024). This is especially true given the critical interplay between individual teacher motivation and the broader workplace environment. Investigating these combined mechanisms

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is essential to bridge key empirical gaps in educational research, especially as the realities of academic work continue to transform. How does performance pressure influence knowledge hiding among university teachers within the Chinese cultural context? What role does psychological resilience play in moderating the relationship between performance pressure and knowledge hiding?

This study highlights how performance pressure shaped by institutional expectations and cultural norms can increase the likelihood of psychological contract breach and knowledge hiding, especially where clear university-driven support structures are lacking. By focusing on university teachers in Guangxi, China, the research underscores how local culture and institutional policies intersect to either facilitate or hinder knowledge sharing. This study is especially relevant as it offers a blueprint for universities: by leveraging both teachers' internal psychological strengths and providing robust contextual support, institutions can better achieve their organizational goals and enhance collective performance. By examining the interaction between personal resilience and organizational context in a distinct cultural setting, this study offers valuable insights into how universities can cultivate a more collaborative and innovative academic environment.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Knowledge Hiding

The improvisation of exchanging knowledge can stimulate innovative behavior, as described by the conservation of resources theory (COT) (Imran et al., 2025). Prior research has used COT to illustrate how personal characteristics play a significant role in shaping teachers' attitudes and behaviors (Bai et al., 2021). However, theoretical and empirical explanations of how performance pressure influences psychological resilience and knowledge hiding remain underexplored (Demerouti, 2025). Some studies find that active knowledge exchange reflects teachers' creativity and innovativeness (Nipyrakis et al., 2026; Nauman et al., 2024; Matikainen et al., 2023). Especially in Chinese academia, where workplace stress and competitive pressures are pronounced, COT provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals respond to threats by conserving or sharing workplace resources. Knowledge hiding is defined as the deliberate attempt to withhold or conceal knowledge requested by others in the workplace (Bratianu et al., 2023; Junaidi, 2026). It manifests through behaviors such as feigned ignorance, evasive concealment, and rationalized withholding, each reflecting specific motivations for information suppression (Zhang & Min, 2021). High performance pressure often activates competitive dynamics, encouraging knowledge hiding to secure individual advantages in research, promotions, or funding (Bai et al., 2021; He et al., 2023). Within the cultural context of Chinese academia, where collectivism, face-saving, and hierarchical respect shape professional behaviors, knowledge hiding can become more subtle and relationship-dependent. Knowledge hiding is deeply intertwined with organizational contexts that employ varying levels of performance pressure on teachers (Wen & Ma, 2021).

Performance Pressure, Psychological Contract Breach, and Knowledge Hiding

Educational organizations use coping mechanisms to mitigate teachers' depletion of these resources, including under performance pressure (Matikainen et al., 2023). Resource loss has a stronger psychological impact than resource acquisition, reinforcing the idea that stressed individuals may withhold knowledge to avoid additional burdens (Junaidi et al., 2026). The

pressure to perform in academic settings, where ongoing research output, grant acquisition, and publication are required, can be unbearable and raise the risk of evasive hiding behavior (Zhang & Min, 2021; Juelskjær & Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). Additionally, the idea explains why maladaptive actions like knowledge hiding are more common among teachers with inadequate psychological resources (Guo et al., 2024). Performance pressure positively affects psychological contract breach violations because it can change how teachers view their responsibilities and the organization's commitments (De Clercq, 2025). Teachers with high performance standards can overwhelm and alienate students. When they lack adequate high-performance standards, they may feel overburdened and abandoned if they receive insufficient resources, training, or recognition.

Performance pressure has led to dissatisfaction and psychological contract breach (Santos et al., 2023). In addition, performance pressure can trigger defensive work behaviors such as knowledge hiding, where teachers intentionally withhold information from colleagues to preserve personal resources (Tokyzhanova & Durst, 2025). This disconnect can create a sense of betrayal, as teachers may believe an organization demands more than the educational outcome (Jahanzeb et al., 2024). The stress associated with performance pressure can intensify mistrust and dissatisfaction, further straining the psychological contract (Ruppel et al., 2022). Performance pressure may affect psychological contract breach by influencing individual characteristics, including psychological resilience (Kenny & Fluck, 2022). Teachers with elevated psychological well-being may manage performance demands more effectively. This underscores the need for management approaches that uphold a robust psychological contract and cultivate a positive workplace atmosphere.

H1. Performance pressure has a positive effect on psychological contract breach

Some universities, especially in China, evaluate their competitive academic environments based on research output and administrative contributions (Zhang & Min, 2021), which can intensify competition among teachers and reduce knowledge sharing (Junaidi et al., 2026). High performance pressure fosters a competitive atmosphere with limited resources such as research funding, promotions, and tenure opportunities (Johann et al., 2022; Löw et al., 2023). In Chinese academic culture, where maintaining psychological comfort and personal reputation is highly valued, teachers may conceal information to protect their interests or standing, often fearing that sharing knowledge is less valued or could inadvertently increase competition. It has become a critical barrier to collective learning and innovation among teachers (Garg et al., 2021). When teachers face high performance expectations, they may feel overwhelmed and unsupported, such as in terms of adequate resources or recognition (Deveci & Ergin, 2018; Zábó et al., 2023). This attitude can reduce teachers' motivation (Kurniawanti et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding the instruments through performance pressure and knowledge management is critical for managing universities and sustaining knowledge exchange in higher education institutions.

H2. Performance pressure has a positive effect on knowledge hiding

Psychological Contract Breach, Performance Pressure, and Knowledge Hiding

Psychological contract breach refers to the perception that an organization has failed to fulfill its promised obligations or expectations in the employment relationship (Kiefer et al., 2022). For university teachers, psychological contract breach encompasses expectations regarding career development, work-life balance, autonomy, and recognition for scholarly achievements (Gander, 2022). Educational institutions can foster a reciprocity relationship to reduce knowledge hiding, thereby enhancing collaboration and improving educational outcomes for teachers. Knowledge hiding arises when teachers simulate unfamiliarity to withhold pivotal information and knowledge (Shen et al., 2024; Zhang & Min, 2021). It

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undermines collegiality and shifts the workplace dynamic from collaboration to competition by providing partial, misleading, or ambiguous information (Hernaus & Černe, 2022). In the context of Chinese academic culture, teachers may further engage in knowledge hiding to maintain a perceived cooperative image while still protecting their own academic advantage, particularly under career-related performance pressure (Ross et al., 2024; Shujahat et al., 2024).

The interplay between performance pressure and psychological resilience is critical in addressing psychological contract breaches and reducing knowledge hiding, as these factors directly influence whether teachers feel secure enough to share knowledge openly (Shen et al., 2024). Understanding and leveraging these dynamics within the cultural and institutional context can help educational organizations develop more effective strategies for fostering genuine collaboration and knowledge sharing. The psychological contract breach undermines trust and triggers defensive behaviors such as reduced organizational commitment, emotional withdrawal, and knowledge hiding (Islam et al., 2024; Nauman et al., 2024). University teachers face multiple demands, including research productivity, teaching excellence, and administrative duties, which require substantial resilience to maintain well-being and sustained performance (Andarwati et al., 2026; Guo et al., 2024).

H3. Psychological contract breach has a positive effect on knowledge hiding

H4. Psychological contract breach mediates the relationship between performance pressure and knowledge hiding.

Psychological Resilience, Performance Pressure, and Psychological Contract Breach

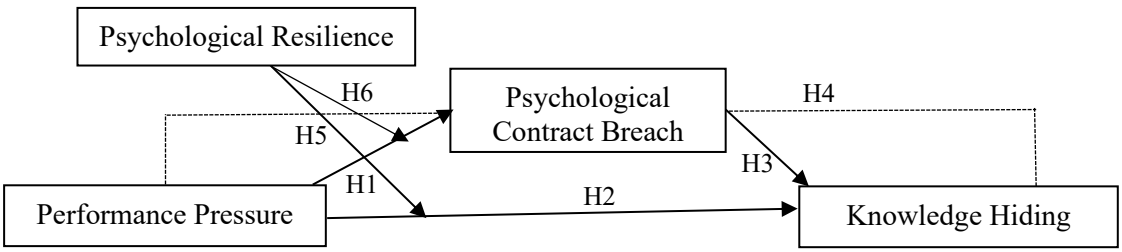
Psychological resilience refers to the ability to recover from adversity, adapt to challenging situations, and sustain mental well-being under pressure (Kuranova et al., 2021), and it can enhance teachers' capacity (Hofgaard et al., 2021). It plays a valuable role in managing performance demands and supporting knowledge exchange (Bratianu et al., 2023). Resilience may help mitigate the adverse impacts of performance pressure, enabling faculty to maintain collaborative and prosocial activities despite high institutional expectations (Leavitt & Kever, 2021; Shujahat et al., 2024). This adaptive coping capacity helps teachers withstand stressors and maintain psychological well-being, which is critical for improving educational performance (Garg et al., 2021). Additionally, psychological contract breach occurs when teachers perceive that their institution has not fulfilled promised obligations, and this breach interacts with resilience in complex ways (Bratianu et al., 2023). In Chinese universities, where cultural values such as collectivism, face-saving, respect for hierarchy, and the pursuit of group harmony shape interpersonal dynamics, performance pressure is often an instinctive response to organizational goals and expectations around knowledge exchange. These cultural factors may intensify the pressure teachers feel to perform and conform, but they also highlight the importance of psychological resilience as a buffer that helps educators navigate complex social expectations, maintain well-being, and support both individual and institutional success.

H5. Psychological resilience moderates performance pressure on teachers' knowledge hiding.

H6. Psychological resilience moderates performance pressure on psychological contract breach.

Figure 1

Research Framework



Methodology

Research Design

The process included a two-step validation procedure to ensure the questionnaire's quality and cultural appropriateness, ensuring the measurement instruments were contextually relevant and sensitive to the unique social and professional environment in which Guangxi University teachers operate. This study applied pretest with anonymous responses and a randomized sequence of measurement items. We also conducted a pilot test to assess whether participants understood the questions and to revise the directions to avoid single-source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An English-Chinese translator reviewed the wording. Respondents completed the questionnaires, which identified the factors influencing teachers' knowledge hiding. Pretesting suggested deleting and modifying specific statements to ensure they were fully understood in the Chinese education context. We then conducted a pilot test to confirm the final wording for the formal investigation. The pilot test aimed to identify participants' responses and implications related to the pre-test questions.

This study included university teachers from 14 cities in Guangxi, representing a diverse cross-section of higher education institutions in the region. Teachers from 10 universities were involved, reflecting a range of university types and academic disciplines. To ensure representativeness, we used stratified random sampling, targeting full-time university faculty members actively engaged in both teaching and research. We distributed 500 questionnaires to eligible participants via email across these universities. Of these, 420 valid responses were returned, resulting in an effective response rate of 84%. This high response rate enhances the reliability of the study's findings. The formal survey was carried out online from April 1, 2024, to May 31, 2024. Furthermore, we applied structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses.

The study used anticipation and post-detection procedures to reduce issues associated with common method variance (CMV). Eichhorn (2014) used Harman's single-factor analysis to validate the common latent factor (CLF) for post-detection, aiming to identify the common method variance (CMV). The first factor accounted for 44.75%, which is less than 50.00%. Additionally, the factor loading of CLF was 0.48, which implies a 35.67% variance of CMV. The result indicated that no significant problem was associated with the CMV. Therefore, using CFA and hypothesis tests is justified.

Instrument

The instrument contained five sections. The first section asked three demographic questions. The remaining four sections included statements regarding performance pressure (4 statements), psychological contract breach (5 statements), psychological resilience (10 statements), and knowledge hiding (12 statements).

Measures

Performance pressure, psychological contract breach, psychological resilience, and knowledge hiding were measured using established scales adopted from relevant prior research. The questionnaire, encompasses a seven-point Likert scale anchored between 1 ("strongly disagree") and 7 ("strongly agree") for all scale items. The constructs measured included performance pressure (Cavanaugh et al., 2000), psychological resilience (Wang et al., 2010), psychological contract breach (Robinson & Wolfe Morrison, 2000), and knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012). Table 1 shows the measures.

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Results

Table 1
Respondent Demographics

Demographic Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	225	53.57
Female	195	46.43
Age Group		
20-30	121	28.81
31-40	183	43.57
41-50	79	18.81
50-60	37	8.81
Academic Rank		
Senior academic	66	15.71
Intermediate	182	43.33
Associate Professor	122	29.05
Professor	50	11.90

Variables Correlation

The means and standard deviations were reported to confirm the subjective data and match the variables primarily observed in the first step (Hair et al., 2019). Mean differences are indicated in standard deviations. Therefore, an effect size greater than .5 indicates that the mean difference is one-half of the standard deviation and fits the observed data well (Table 3). Furthermore, bivariate correlations were obtained using Pearson correlation coefficients, and positive values indicate that all variables increase together.

Table 2
Correlation Matrix for Measurement Scales

Constructs	Mean	SD	PP	PC	PR	KH
PP	5.39	0.860	**0.876****			
PC	5.54	0.836	0.656**	**0.862****		
PR	5.52	0.780	0.395**	0.348**	**0.854**	
KH	5.50	0.677	0.768**	0.732**	0.412**	**0.873**

Note. PP = performance pressure, PC = psychological contract breach, PR = psychological resilience, KH = knowledge hiding. **: $p < .01$

This study employed a two-stage approach designed by Hair et al. (2019). First, the measurement model used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the reliabilities and validities of the research constructs. The structural model tested the strength and direction of the proposed relationships among the constructs. Table 4 shows that the CFA results surpassed all the criteria for hypothesis testing.

Table 3
Model Fit Requirements and Results

Fit Index	Good Fit	Acceptable fit	Fit result	Conclusion
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.05-0.08	0.069	Accepted
CFI	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	0.923	Accepted
TLI	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	0.906	Accepted
NFI	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	0.924	Accepted
GFI	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.85-0.90	0.890	Accepted
AVE	≥ 0.50	≥ 0.50	0.510	Accepted

Measurement Result

Table 5 shows that all the items of all the variables loaded significantly, and, therefore, no item was deleted. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results ($\chi 2/df = 2.863$, TLI = 0.941, RMSEA = 0.067, GFI = 0.935, CFI = 0.945, and IFI = 0.945) show that the data fit the model well. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) were well above the threshold, indicating strong inter-item reliability among variables (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 4
Measurement Results

Constructs	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Performance Pressure (Cavanaugh et al., 2000)		**0.930**	**0.768**	**0.891**
PP1: The university offer high performance targets for me.	0.893			
PP2: My university inspects my work performance.	0.878			
PP3: My supervisor evaluates my work performance.	0.882			
PP4: My career prospects depend on my performance.	0.851			
Psychological Contract (Robinson & Wolfe Morrison, 2000)		**0.889**	**0.863**	**0.905**
PB1: The university fulfilled commitments to me.	0.874			
PB2: I feel that the university honored the promises made during recruitment.	0.850			
PB3: The have sense of belonging with my university.	0.846			
PB4: The rewards system has delivered.	0.883			
PB5: I fulfilling responsibilities to university.	0.859			

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Table 4
Continued

Constructs	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Psychological Resilience (Wang et al., 2010)		**0.894**	**0.730**	**0.885**
PR1: I can adapt when things change.	0.901			
PR2: I can handle anything in life.	0.865			
PR3: I try to see the positive side of things.	0.790			
PR4: Hardships make me stronger.	0.843			
PR5: I can recover from difficulties.	0.868			
PR6: I achieve my goals even obstacles.	0.857			
PR7: I can still focus and think clearly.	0.824			
PR8: I can deal with life's challenges.	0.842			
PR9: I can manage unpleasant.	0.905			
Knowledge Hiding (Connelly et al., 2012)		**0.875**	**0.763**	**0.883**
PD1: When colleagues ask me something, I act like I don't know.	0.856			
PD2: When colleagues ask, I say I don't know, even if I do.	0.933			
PD3: When colleagues ask, I pretend I don't understand.	0.891			
PD4: When colleagues ask, I say I'm not familiar with it.	0.883			
EH1: When colleagues ask me, I agree to help but never actually do it.	0.816			
EH2: When colleagues ask, I agree to assist the information they don't need.	0.880			
EH3: When colleagues ask, I promise to help later as I can.	0.889			
EH4: When colleagues ask, I give irrelevant information what they really need.	0.853			
RH1: When a colleague asks, I can't give out the information.	0.845			
RH2: When colleagues ask, I am not confidential for the information.	0.864			
RH3: When colleagues ask, I say supervisor won't let me share that information.	0.881			
RH4: When colleagues ask, I say I'm not allowed to answer those questions.	0.887			

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; PP = performance pressure; PB = psychological contract breach; PR = psychological resilience.

Structural Result

The model fit for the data was adequate $\chi 2/df = 3.779$, GFI = 0.925, NFI = 0.930, CFI = 0.947, IFI = 0.947, and RMSEA= 0.061 (Table 6). Performance pressure positively and significantly affected psychological contract breach ($\gamma 11 = 0.637$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Performance pressure also positively and significantly affects knowledge hiding ($\gamma 12 = 0.397$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Furthermore, psychological contract breach positively and significantly affects knowledge hiding ($\gamma 13 = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3 (Table 6).

To test the direct and proposed mediating effects in the proposed model, we ran Hayes PROCESS Model 4. The results indicated that all the direct effects of the proposed hypotheses were supported. The indirect results showed the relationship between performance pressure and knowledge hiding. The study indicated that psychological contract breach mediated the relationship between performance pressure and knowledge hiding among teachers ($\beta = 0.637$ x 0.325 = 0.207, CI = (0.167, 0.248)); H4 was supported. These findings indicate that individuals with higher commitment and contribution to the university tend to hide less knowledge regarding organizational goals and performance pressure. These results suggest that while performance pressure triggers knowledge hiding, both psychological contract breach and organizational goal pressure are important mediating mechanisms that shape knowledge behavior among teachers.

Table 5
Mediation Result

Direct effect			***b***	***T***	**95% CI Result**	***b***
Performance pressure	→ Psychological contract breach		0.637	17.754***	(0.566, 0.702)	H1 Supported
Performance pressure	→ Knowledge hiding		0.397	13.776***	(0.340, 0.453)	H2 Supported
Psychological contract breach	→ Knowledge hiding		0.325	10.974***	(0.267, 0.383)	H3 Supported
Indirect effect			***B***	**SE**	**95% CI**	
Performance pressure	→ Psychological contract breach	→ Knowledge hiding	0.207***	0.020	(0.167, 0.248)	H4 Supported

Note. Significant at *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$

Moderation Result

Table 7 highlights how three key elements, performance pressure, psychological resilience, and their interaction, impact psychological contract breach and knowledge hiding. First, performance pressure refers to the demands or expectations placed on teachers to achieve high results. The findings indicate that when teachers feel more pressure to perform, they are more likely to experience a sense of organizational goal failure (psychological contract breach). Performance pressure also encourages teachers to hide knowledge or information from colleagues. The results underline that feeling pressured at work does not just increase stress; it can disrupt trust and communication. Second, psychological resilience also plays an important role in facilitating psychological contract breach and knowledge hiding as a moderating variable. This indicates that psychological resilience alone does not alleviate the adverse effects

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of performance pressure and psychological resilience when teachers respond defensively to stress. Finally, the interaction between performance pressure and psychological resilience can reduce knowledge hiding among teachers. Specifically, when teachers have low psychological resilience, performance pressure positively affects knowledge hiding. Low psychological resilience strengthens the positive effect of performance pressure on knowledge hiding. H5 and H6 were supported.

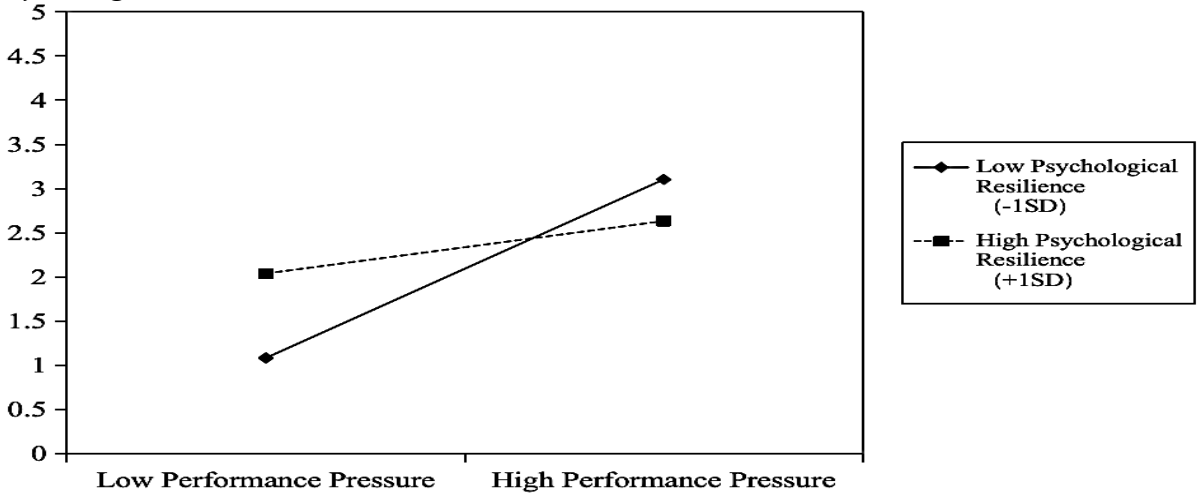
Table 6
Moderation Test Results

Model	**Psychological Contract Breach**			**Knowledge Hiding**		
	β	**t**	**95% CI**	**β**	**t**	**95% CI**
Constant	5.539	172.96***	(5.476, 5.602)	5.503	252.75***	(5.460, 5.547)
Performance pressure	0.597	15.33***	(0.521, 0.674)	0.562	21.198**	(0.509, 0.614)
Psychological resilience	0.114	2.63*	(0.029, 0.199)	0.107	3.644**	(0.049, 0.164)
Interaction term	0.009	1.24*	(0.016, 0.096)	0.108	2.133*	(0.097, 0.163)

Note. Significant at *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$.

Figure 2 shows how different workplace factors influence teacher feelings and behaviors. When teachers feel strong pressure to perform, they are more likely to believe the organization has not kept its promises (psychological contract breach). This same pressure also makes teachers keep information to themselves instead of sharing knowledge. The findings highlight the importance of managing performance pressure in the workplace. Universities should consider balancing performance demands with support systems to promote a friendly work environment. Therefore, enhancing psychological resilience among teachers may be a strategic approach for universities to reduce knowledge hiding and foster a collaborative academic environment.

Figure 2
Psychological Resilience Moderation Role to Bridge Performance Pressure Effect on Psychological Contract Breach



Discussion

This study investigates the impact of performance pressure on teacher knowledge hiding, with psychological contract breach as a mediator. It also examines how teacher psychological resilience moderates the relationship between performance pressure, psychological contract breach, and knowledge hiding. Performance pressure plays a crucial role in influencing teacher psychological contract breaches. The results align with prior studies, which indicate that heightened expectations such as productivity, teaching evaluations, and service commitments play an important role in enhancing teachers' trust and career development (Demerouti, 2025; Lai et al., 2024). This finding indicates that when teachers are faced with performance pressure such as demands for higher student achievement, additional duties outside the classroom, or expectations to innovate the learning process, they need reciprocal support and resources from the university to avoid a psychological contract breach. For instance, if schools expect teachers to improve student outcomes without providing adequate training and resources, teachers might feel that mutual support and fairness have been violated (Johann et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2026). Therefore, proactive, culturally sensitive institutional support is essential to build trust, promote collaboration, and support faculty's continuous professional growth.

Performance pressure positively affects teachers' knowledge hiding. This aligns with prior studies showing that performance pressure is increasing in educational environments due to accountability standards and student performance (Hernaus & Černe, 2022; Löw et al., 2023). In addition, teachers perceive their colleagues as competitors rather than collaborators when evaluated based on students' learning performance and innovative learning. Teachers perceive their colleagues as competitors rather than collaborators because evaluations focus on students' learning performance. Teachers perceived that knowledge hiding could secure recognition and promotions. In addition, performance pressure can lead teachers to hide valuable resources and teaching strategies. Moreover, performance pressure can promote knowledge hiding by creating a competitive environment, reducing trust, and limiting opportunities for open sharing and collaboration (Garg et al., 2021; Kenny & Fluck, 2022). Although collectivism emphasizes group achievement, the competitive evaluation systems in Chinese universities can inadvertently undermine these values, encouraging individualistic strategies like knowledge hiding for personal advancement. The interplay between traditional cultural values and modern institutional pressures highlights the importance of developing culturally sensitive policies that balance competition with trust, collaboration, and shared success within educational institutions.

Psychological contract breach has a substantial role in influencing knowledge hiding among teachers. These findings confirm preliminary studies showing that when university teachers perceive a psychological contract breach, they may adopt defensive knowledge-withholding behaviors (Matikainen et al., 2023; Nauman et al., 2024; Zhang & Wang, 2021). A psychological contract breach occurs when teachers perceive that their school has failed to fulfill promised or expected obligations. Moreover, a psychological contract breach can foster a competitive or defensive climate in which teachers prioritize their own success over collective improvement. This can create an environment where teachers view knowledge as a personal asset rather than a communal resource. Teachers who experience a breach may also view knowledge sharing as risky, fearing that others might misuse their contributions. It undermines collaboration, reduces the spread of best practices, and limits professional development opportunities within the school.

Psychological contract breach emerges as a crucial mediating variable that connects performance pressure to knowledge hiding. This finding highlights the important role of performance pressure. It often pushes teachers to achieve higher results and drive productivity;

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however, it also creates stress when teachers do not receive adequate support or recognition (Imran et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2026). In addition, if teachers feel the institution has failed to honor its implicit promises (such as providing resources, manageable workloads, or professional respect), they may begin to lose trust in the organization. It can reduce organizational commitment and knowledge exchange. Knowledge hiding becomes a way to safeguard their position and cope with feelings of inequity or lack of recognition, shifting teachers' focus from collective success to individual survival. As a result, knowledge hiding may become a subtle but prevalent means for teachers to protect themselves when institutional support falters, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive management practices that reinforce trust and collective goals.

Psychological resilience plays a crucial role in moderating how teachers experience and respond to performance pressure. This finding indicates that teachers with high psychological resilience are better equipped to manage demands and stressors with positive strategies, maintain perspective, and seek solutions rather than focusing on disappointment with the organization. These results align with He et al. (2023a), Junaidi et al. (2026), and Ruppel et al. (2022), who found that teachers with lower resilience may be more vulnerable to stress and disappointment when expectations are unmet, making them more likely to perceive a breach in the psychological contract. This study also highlights the complex psychological balancing act that teachers perform to navigate the competing demands of institutional productivity and personal sustainability. Additionally, teachers with higher psychological resilience may draw on personal strengths such as problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies to overcome obstacles imposed by performance pressures. This cultural backdrop intensifies the importance of fostering resilience as a buffer against the psychological strains of performance pressure within Chinese academic environments.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant moderating role of psychological resilience in the relationship between performance pressure, psychological contract breach, and knowledge hiding among university teachers. The findings show that while resilience generally helps individuals cope with demanding environments and maintain engagement, low resilience can exacerbate the tendency to hide knowledge when performance pressures intensify. Specifically, teachers with low psychological resilience are more likely to withdraw and withhold knowledge as a defensive strategy, particularly when they perceive their psychological contract with the institution to be breached or threatened. These results underscore the dual nature of psychological resilience: it not only protects individuals by helping them withstand stress and adapt to challenges, but its absence can also significantly increase vulnerability to negative workplace behaviors such as knowledge hiding. Psychological resilience is especially vital: it helps teachers navigate the tension between institutional demands and personal well-being, while its lack amplifies culturally influenced tendencies toward withdrawal and knowledge hiding under pressure.

Theoretical Implications

This study advances theory on knowledge hiding by drawing on and expanding conservation of resources theory (COR) in the context of Chinese higher education. COR theory posits that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect valuable resources, and that stress occurs when these resources are threatened or lost. In the high-pressure environment of academia, especially amid institutional reforms and rising performance expectations, university

teachers may perceive their psychological, social, or professional resources as being at risk. This perception can lead to knowledge hiding as a defensive strategy to protect personal resources. This study demonstrates how performance pressure serves as a significant resource threat, prompting individuals to engage in knowledge hiding per COR theory. This enriches our understanding of COR by showing how breaches in mutual expectations can accelerate resource-loss cycles, and it highlights the importance of perceived fairness and organizational support in resource retention. This research invites a more nuanced application of COR theory in organizational and educational settings, suggesting that effective interventions must address both systemic resource threats and individual resource-building to reduce knowledge hiding and foster collaboration.

Practical Implications

This study offers several important implications. First, the significant influence of performance pressure on psychological contract breach highlights the need to manage performance evaluation systems effectively. University administrators should ensure that performance targets are realistic, transparent, and aligned with faculty resources and support structures. Performance demands that disregard individual capacities can erode trust and foster perceptions of psychological contract breach, thereby encouraging knowledge hiding. As such, universities should develop academic collaboration and knowledge sharing as a core management system. Furthermore, strengthening faculty psychological resilience is a strategic approach to sustaining both individual well-being and institutional effectiveness, ultimately promoting knowledge exchange behavior among teachers. University management practices that reflect sensitivity to these cultural norms by promoting open communication, collective achievement, and mutual support can help reduce the risk of knowledge hiding and psychological contract breach. Designing performance management and resilience-building initiatives with cultural context in mind will enhance their effectiveness and foster a more collaborative academic environment.

Second, it is critical to understand how both teachers' personal factors and organizational effects contribute to reducing knowledge hiding, particularly in relation to psychological contract breach. This implies that universities must prioritize maintaining open communication channels and fostering a culture of fairness, recognition, and mutual respect. Timely university feedback and rewards, acknowledgment of faculty contributions, and opportunities for professional development can reinforce teachers’ sense of belonging and strengthen the psychological contract. Third, while psychological resilience enables faculty members to adapt to challenging circumstances, it may also encourage selective knowledge hiding as a protective strategy under sustained pressure. Therefore, universities should develop intervention programs such as monthly communication activities and group discussions that enhance teacher resilience. Finally, creating supportive organizational climates is essential for fostering trust, collaboration, and psychological well-being, ultimately promoting knowledge-sharing behavior. Universities that design interventions and support systems with these cultural values in mind, promoting inclusive dialogue, respectful recognition, and collective achievements, are more likely to cultivate environments where trust flourishes, knowledge hiding is minimized, and collaborative innovation thrives.

Limitations and Future Study Directions

First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality between the studied variables. Although theoretical frameworks such as the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory support the proposed directional relationships, longitudinal studies are needed

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to capture the dynamic processes of resource depletion, contract violations, and knowledge hiding over time. Second, the data were collected from university teachers within a specific institutional and cultural context. Organizational structures, cultural norms regarding knowledge sharing, and academic expectations may vary across countries and educational systems. Future studies should consider replicating this model across diverse cultural and institutional settings to examine whether similar patterns emerge under different contextual conditions. Third, although the study incorporated both psychological contract breach and psychological resilience as mediating variables, other potential mechanisms may also explain the relationship between performance pressure and knowledge hiding. Finally, while knowledge hiding was examined as a multidimensional construct including playing dumb hiding, evasive hiding, and rational hiding, this study did not explore potential moderators that may buffer or exacerbate these behaviors. Future research could investigate how leadership style, organizational climate, or individual personality traits interact with performance pressure to influence knowledge hiding behaviors.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, ***Y.T.*** and ***Y.L.***; methodology, ***K.B., S.S*** and ***J.J.;*** software, ***Y.L.*** and ***J.J.***; validation, ***Y.T.*** and ***S.S.***; formal analysis, ***Y.Y. Y.L.*** and ***J.J.***; investigation, ***K.B.*** and ***Y.L.***; resources, ***Y.T.;*** data curation, ***J.J.***; writing—original draft preparation, ***Y.Y., Y.L.*** and ***S.S.***; writing—review and editing, ***Y.T.*** and ***Y.L.***; project administration, ***S.S.*** and ***K.B.*** All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

To protect privacy, the data and materials are not publicly available but can be provided upon reasonable request to qualified researchers.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

All participants provided informed consent prior to enrollment in the study. Written informed consent was obtained from all individuals included in the research. The Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the study protocol. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. All participants provided informed consent after the authors explained the study purpose and assured confidentiality.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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