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Antecedents and consequences of follower moqi: leader humility, follower humility, and knowledge hiding

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Abstract

Contrasted to most leadership research which treated followers either as non-existent or as passive entities, follower moqi enriches followership literature by stressing followers' active role in co-creating leadership and outcomes with leaders. Given the effectiveness of follower moqi in the leadership process, we integrated social information processing theory to explore its antecedents and outcomes. Specifically, we hypothesized that leader humility is positively related to follower moqi; follower moqi, in turn, decreases knowledge hiding; this mechanism of follower moqi is moderated by follower humility so that leader humility increases more follower moqi with higher follower humility. Our results supported our hypotheses in a muti-wave time-lagged study of 315 leader-follower dyads. Overall, our research highlights that leader humility has a stronger effect on follower moqi under the context of higher follower humility. In addition, follower moqi in turn decreases knowledge hiding. The theoretical and practical implications of this study are presented and discussed.

Keywords Follower moqi · Leader humility · Knowledge hiding · Follower humility

Introduction

Follower moqi refers to a state of unspoken or tacit understanding between leaders and followers from the follower-centric perspective (Zheng et al., 2019a). In particular, follower moqi stresses followers' proactive understandings about leaders' unspoken requirements, expectations, intentions, and desires based on non-verbal cues including body gestures, facial expressions, and voice tone (Bernieri & Rosenthal, 1991; Zheng et al., 2019a). Higher follower moqi means followers understand leaders' tacit expectations, requirements, intentions, as well as desires better and are willing to cooperate with leaders (Zheng et al., 2019a; Zheng et al., 2019b; Li et al., 2020). Different from most leadership research treating followers as passive parts in the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Shamir, 2007; Zheng et al., 2019a), follower moqi highlights followers' active role in co-constructing leadership and outcomes with leaders. Followers' activity in understanding leaders and co-recreating leadership's outcomes with leaders is important to today's organizations (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), especially for those with high time pressure and much workload. In the research field, an increasing number of management researchers began to show interest in follower moqi and study its' antecedents and impacts (Wang et al., 2018b; Li et al., 2020). Specifically, Zheng et al. (2019a) and Wang et al. (2018b) showed that followers' implicit and explicit feedback-seeking behavior is beneficial to increase follower moqi. Apart from previous research concerning follower moqi's antecedents, prior studies also explored the positive influence of follower moqi on followers' psychosocial states and behaviors, such as trust in leader (Li et al., 2020), insider status, and knowledge sharing (Zheng et al., 2019b), goal clarity and reward recommendations (Zheng et al., 2019a), and task performance (Wang et al., 2018b; Zheng et al., 2019a).

However, only these studies related to follower moqi are not enough and it is necessary to expand our understandings of follower moqi's formation and impacts. In this study, we tried to extend existing limited research concerning follower

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moqi by focusing on its development and outcomes. Specifically, we propose that the interactive effect between leader humility and employee humility will increase follower moqi and in turn reduces employee knowledge hiding. The choices of these variables and the logic lines of our predictions are based on social information processing theory (SIP theory, Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990). Given we target on studying the mediator (i.e., follower moqi), we will emphasize the reasons for choosing our independent variable (i.e., leader humility), moderator (i.e., employee humility), and dependent variable (i.e., knowledge hiding) around follower moqi. However, the way we put forward variables may be easier to blur our logic lines among variables. As such, before presenting specific reasons we choose each variable in our theoretical model, we will draw on SIP theory to discuss the overall relationships among our proposed variables to explain our proposed model clearly and logically.

SIP theory suggested that situational factors play crucial roles in influencing individuals' attitudes or behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Thomas & Griffin, 1983). In organizational contexts, leaders who take higher status and close interactions with followers are especially important information sources in impacting followers' attitudes or behaviors (Yaffe & Kark, 2011). As for the underlying mechanism, previous studies mainly chose psychological states, such as relational energy and emotional exhaustion (Wang et al., 2018a), and cognitive processes, such as followers' perspective taking (Wang, Zhang, & Jia, 2017), to be the mediator between leadership and employees' behaviors. In our research, we introduce follower moqi as the mechanism linking leaders (e.g., leader humility) to followers' behaviors (e.g., knowledge hiding). It is reasonable for us to choose follower moqi as the mediator because the premise for followers to change attitudes or behaviors is that they can understand leaders' expectations, intentions, and requirements well (i.e., follower moqi). Besides, we suggest that the indirect effect of leader humility on knowledge hiding via follower moqi varies with followers' characteristics (e.g., employee humility). This is because SIP theory suggests that personal factors (e.g., employees' motivation, ability, and predisposition to process information), especially for employees who have similar characteristic with leaders (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Bhave et al., 2010), can decide the depth of information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990). In sum, it is appropriate to use SIP theory to argue that the interactive effect between leader humility and employee humility can increase follower moqi and then reduce knowledge hiding.

Below are specific reasons for choosing leader humility, employee humility, and knowledge hiding to explain follower moqi's development and impacts. As mentioned before, leaders who take over vital resources of followers' promotion and salary and keep direct interactions with followers have a stronger impact on followers' attitudes or behaviors (e.g., Yaffe & Kark, 2011). Given leaders' vital role in influencing followers to process information, we will explore the role of leaders played in predicting follower moqi. This leader perspective is different from the follower perspective that Zheng et al. (2019a) adopted to choose followers' feedback-seeking behavior as the antecedent of follower moqi. Indeed, Zheng et al. (2019a) also realized the importance of leaders' traits in boosting follower moqi and pointed out that leaders, scoring high on constructs similar to feedback giving behavior, can increase follower moqi (Zheng et al., 2019a). In line with this logic, we choose leader humility, a trait manifested by a willingness to view oneself accurately, appreciate followers' strengths and contributions, and learn from followers (Owens & Hekman, 2012), as the antecedent of follower moqi because leader humility is prominently proactive in sending information to followers. Specifically, when leaders with humility show appreciation and teachability to followers (Owens & Hekman, 2012), implying to followers what they have done is expected and admired by leaders; when leaders with humility admit their own mistakes or limitations, implying to followers these contents are not encouraged and desired by leaders. As a result, followers will increase moqi with leaders with humility in the process of understanding these leaders' expectations and dislikes.

As suggested by SIP theory that personal factors (i.e, individuals' motivation, ability, and predisposition to engage in effortful processing of information) are determinants of the depth of information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990), we propose the formation of follower moqi is not only related to leader humility but also be influenced by followers' own characteristic. In other words, the influence of leader humility on follower moqi may vary with followers' characteristics. Indeed, Zheng et al., (2019a) stated that follower moqi is not only influenced by leaders' traits but also influenced by followers' traits. In particular, individuals who have similarities with information sources are more likely to process information elaborately and be influenced deeper (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Bhave et al., 2010). Accordingly, we choose follower humility, a trait that similar to leaders' trait, as the conditional factor under which the positive association between leader humility and follower moqi can be strengthened with higher follower humility.

Investigating how follower moqi is developed is our first main research question, another research goal is to explore the impacts of follower moqi and show follower moqi's value in organizations. According to SIP theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990), followers will change their behaviors when they sense environmental information, such as leaders' expectations or desires. In our research, we choose knowledge hiding, an intentional attempt to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another individual in

workplaces (Connelly et al., 2012), as the behavioral outcome of follower moqi, and we expect follower moqi to reduce knowledge hiding. Compared to other forms of follower behaviors, such as helping behavior and task performance, we choose knowledge hiding is because of our contributions to business practitioners and knowledge hiding literature. Knowledge hiding is detrimental to interpersonal relationships, organizational performance, and individual performance (Connelly et al., 2012; Pan, Zhang, Teo, & Lim, 2018). In addition, this behavior increasingly exists in organizations, especially in the context of high competitiveness and distrust (Connelly et al., 2019; Men et al., 2020). Surprisingly, research about exploring its predicators is very limited (Connelly et al., 2019). Among few studies which investigated knowledge hiding's predictors, interpersonal antecedents (e.g., interpersonal distrust, workplace ostracism among co-workers, and leader-follower relationships; Connelly et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2019) are considered to the primary factor. However, they neglected that followers may decrease knowledge hiding proactively once they perceive leaders' expectations of not hiding knowledge. In this study, we will imply to practical managers that follower moqi is helpful to reduce knowledge hiding, which not only expands our understandings about follower moqi's influence but also knowledge hiding's antecedents.

In summary, we contribute to a small but growing literature related to follower moqi by investigating its development and outcomes. First, drawing upon SIP theory, this study is among the first to explore the influence of leader humility on follower moqi, which answered the call of Zheng et al. (2019a) to explore the role of leadership played in forming follower moqi. Second, we contribute to follower moqi by exploring its influence on knowledge hiding, which expands our understandings of the outcomes of follower moqi. Third, we examined follower humility as a key contingency factor, echoing Zheng et al. (2019a)'s call for research that explores the effect of follower trait on follower moqi. Specifically, we showed that follower humility strengthens the positive influence of leader humility on follower moqi. Finally, previous research (e.g., Wang et al., 2018a) which used SIP theory mostly chose attitudes or cognitive factors as the mechanism linking to environmental information sources and behaviors. However, they ignored that the premise for individuals to be influenced by information sources is individuals have the ability to understand information sources' implicit or explicit signals. Our study contributes to SIP theory by treating follower moqi as the new mediator between the information source (i.e., leader humility) and employees' behavioral outcomes (i.e., knowledge hiding). The theoretical model is shown in Fig. 1.

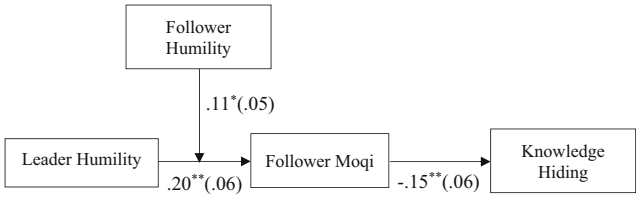

Fig. 1 indicates the conceptual research model and the result of path analysis. (1) Path coefficients are standardized; Standard error is presented in parenthesis; (2) $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, two tailed

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Follower Moqi

Moqi is linguistically formed from two indigenous Chinese characters: mo (默), meaning silence or without words, and qi (契), describing consensus, rapport, or fit (Zheng et al., 2019a, P. 958). These characters represented a state between two parties, whereby one party can sense and understand another party's tacit understanding, implicit consent, and exhibit cooperative actions without explicit verbal communication (Zheng et al., 2019a; Zheng et al., 2019b; Li et al., 2020). Moqi exists in two parties under many conditions, such as leaders and followers in workplace contexts. Consistent with Zheng et al. (2019a), we focused on follower moqi which stress followers' understandings about their leaders' requirements, expectations, intentions, and desires based on nonverbal approaches such as facial expressions, body gestures, and voice tone.

Before proposing our hypotheses, we would like to describe follower moqi around other constructs in our theoretical model (i.e., leader humility, employee humility, and knowledge hiding) so as to highlight the characteristics of follower moqi in this study. As a relational construct between followers and leaders, follower moqi specifies a state that followers take actively part in forming close relationships with leaders in a way of sensing leaders' tacit cues, such as leaders' facial expressions, body gestures, and voice tone (Bernieri & Rosenthal, 1991; Zheng et al., 2019a). Apart from followers' active role played in developing follower moqi, leaders who actively send the implicit or explicit information to followers are also beneficial to improve follower moqi (Zheng et al., 2019a). Aligned with the relational nature of follower moqi, individuals with humility have an interpersonal orientation, are other-oriented, and care about others' benefits (Owens et al., 2013). In other words, leaders and followers with higher humility will be more likely to proactively send and understand information from another part in dyads. As a result, follower moqi is possible to be enhanced. Follower moqi not only stresses followers' understandings about leaders' implicit information, but also highlights followers' cooperation with leaders' unspoken expectations, desires, or requirements (Zheng et al., 2019a; Zheng et al., 2019b; Li et al., 2020).

Knowledge hiding which is harmful to leader effectiveness is not expected by leaders. Thus, follower moqi enables followers to reduce knowledge hiding.

Leader Humility and Follower Moqi

We propose leader humility, a trait that is manifested by appreciating followers' contributions and strengths, learning from followers, and admitting their limitations (Owens & Hekman, 2012), positively associates with follower moqi. According to SIP theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990), followers are adaptive organisms and they tend to seek information from the social environment actively, especially the immediate environment they are in (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). A direct social environment, such as leaders with power, is the most crucial information source for followers impacting their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Griffin, 1983; Cialdini, 2009). In other words, followers will pay more attention to the information sent by humble leaders, no matter explicit information cues (e.g., leader feedback-giving behavior and leader directions), or underlying information cues (e.g., leaders' gestures and look). Given signals from humble leaders are treated seriously by followers, followers will be more likely to capture much more information about humble leaders' expectations or requirements and then increase their moqi with humble leaders.

Additionally, leaders who express information proactively to followers will further help to increase follower moqi. Similarly, Zheng et al. (2019a) stated that leaders who engage in behaviors similar to feedback-giving behavior are beneficial to follower moqi's improvement. Therefore, Leaders with humility are predicated to improve follower moqi because of their proactivity in expressing desires and dislikes to others (e.g., the targeted followers and their co-workers). Specifically, when humble leaders show appreciation to others and willingness to learn from others (Owens & Hekman, 2012), followers will be more likely to perceive that these attitudes or behaviors are expected and desired by leaders; when humble leaders admit their own limitations or mistakes, followers will be easier to understand these limitations and mistakes are not expected and required by leaders. As a result, followers will know better about humble leaders' expectations and dislikes and increase follower moqi.

> Hypothesis 1: Leader humility is positively related to follower moqi.

Knowledge Hiding as an Outcome

Knowledge hiding is defined as an intentional attempt to conceal or withhold knowledge that has been requested by coworkers (Connelly et al., 2012). In this research, we expect follower moqi to reduce knowledge hiding. We will illustrate specific reasons for this negative relationship by integrating follower moqi's characteristics with SIP theory.

First, follower moqi is characterized by taking an active role in understanding leaders' unspoken expectations and intentions (Zheng et al., 2019a). According to SIP theory, leaders who have direct relationships with followers and higher power are the most important information sources influencing followers' behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Griffin, 1983). Given follower moqi captures information from leaders, the understood information from leaders is possible to change followers' behaviors deeply. In addition, higher follower moqi means that followers have a higher ability to make sense of information from leaders. The ability to process information is a vital factor in deciding the depth of information processing (Zalesny & Ford, 1990). In other words, information from leaders will have a bigger influence on the behaviors of followers with higher moqi. In line with the above logic, followers with higher moqi will be likely to adapt their behaviors to leaders' implicit desires or expectations. Leaders mostly expect followers not to hide knowledge in organizations because of detriments caused by knowledge hiding, such as bad interpersonal relationships, reduced organizational performance, and decreased individual performance (Connelly et al., 2012). As a result, follower moqi will be helpful to change followers' behaviors, such as knowledge hiding.

Second, follower moqi is also characterized by cooperating with leaders' unspoken desires or expectations and behave as leaders expected with little direction (Zheng et al., 2019a; Li et al., 2020), which shows followers' motivation to adapt their behaviors to leaders' expectations or desires. SIP theory suggested that individuals' motivation to engage in processing information is a determinant of the depth of information processing (Zalesny & Ford, 1990). Then, followers with higher moqi will be more likely to reduce knowledge hiding to adapt to leaders' unspoken expectations or requirements.

Combing Hypothesis 1 and the above argument about the negative influence of follower moqi on knowledge hiding together, we expect follower moqi to mediate the relationship between leader humility and knowledge hiding. Specifically, we predict that leader humility reduces knowledge hiding through increasing follower moqi. In fact, according to SIP theory, it is reasonable for us to treat follower moqi as the mediator. SIP theory indicated that individuals make sense of and understand their work contexts by processing social information, especially cues from their leaders, which in turn influences their work attitudes or behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Yaffe & Kark, 2011). In this process, only when followers understand leaders' implicit intentions, requirements, and expectations (i.e., follower moqi), their behaviors or attitudes are able to be influenced deeper by leaders. Then,

it is reasonable for us to treat follower moqi as the mediator between leader humility and knowledge hiding.

Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 2: Follower moqi mediates the relationship between leader humility and knowledge hiding such that leader humility has a negative influence on knowledge hiding via increased follower moqi.

Moderating Role of Follower Humility

As suggested by Zheng et al. (2019a), followers' traits play a role in the process of follower moqi's development. In our research, we choose employee humility as the moderator between leader humility and follower moqi based on SIP theory. SIP theory highlights that "people evaluate information sources in terms of personal relevance, using similar others for comparison: the more similar someone is, the more relevant his or her views for understanding one's own world" (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, p. 228). While the personal relevance of the message is the most important factor in influencing the relation of the depth of social information processing to the strength of perceptions and attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Then, individuals (i.e, information receivers) will be more sensitive to explicit or implicit information from senders when they are similar to information senders in some aspects. In line with this logic, compared with followers with less humility, followers with higher humility will be easier to understand expectations, desires, intentions, and requirements from leaders who have a similar trait to followers (i.e., leader humility). As a result, follower humility can intensify the positive influence of leader humility on follower moqi.

Apart from the above individual relevance (i.e., the similar personality between leaders with humility and followers with humility), the predisposition and ability to seek information and engage in effortful processing are also determinants of the depth of information processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Zalesny & Ford, 1990; Longmire & Harrison, 2018). Compared with followers with lower humility, followers with higher humility are more likely to enhance the positive relationship between leader humility and follower moqi because they have a stronger willingness to seek information related to leaders and the ability to process this information. To explain, on the one hand, followers with higher humility are more willing to consider the views of leaders with humility because of their altruism (LaBouff et al., 2012) and growth-mindest (Owens et al., 2013; Tong et al., 2016). In other words, humble followers' other-oriented tendencies and the need to achieve personal growth enable them to have enough motivation to seek and process effortful information about humble leaders' expectations or intentions (i.e., follower moqi). On the other hand, followers with higher humility have more ability to get and process enriched information about humble leaders directly and indirectly, which in turn increases follower moqi. First, individuals with higher humility are better at considering the views of others (i.e., leaders) (Owens et al., 2013; Tong et al., 2016). This suggests that followers with humility are more capable to seek information related to humble leaders' requirements, intentions, and expectations than followers with lower humility. Second, followers with higher humility can strengthen the positive influence of leader humility on follower moqi indirectly by seeking information about humble leaders' ideas and needs from coworkers. Followers with higher humility are more likely to appreciate coworkers' strengths and contributions (Owens & Hekman, 2012) which are mainly admired by leaders. Then, it is possible for humble followers to indirectly understand what kind of behaviors or attitudes are expected and desired by humble leaders. As a result, followers with humility will have more moqi with leaders.

> Hypothesis 3: Follower humility moderates the relationship between leader humility and Moqi, such that the relationship is more positive when follower humility is high.

Moderated-Mediation Model

In addition to the moderating effects of follower humility on the relationship between leader humility and follower moqi, it is logical to expect that follower humility will conditionally influence the strength of the indirect association between leader humility and knowledge hiding. SIP theory suggests that followers who have similar traits with leaders process information deeper and their perceptions and behaviors will be influenced deeper (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Then, it is reasonable to predict followers with higher humility will be more likely to increase follower moqi with humble leaders and then decrease knowledge hiding. Based on the above discussions, we predict that:

> Hypothesis 4: Follower humility moderates the indirect effect of leader humility on knowledge hiding via follower moqi, such that the mediated relationship is stronger when follower humility is high, compared to when follower humility is low.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

We adopted a time-lagged survey-based design to test our model. The participants (i.e., followers and their immediate

leaders) were from two recruitment channels. Specifically, we recruited participants from a larger company located in a northern province of China. HR of this company helped us to distribute surveys to participants randomly. In addition, we also posted the recruitment information via Wechat Movement, the most popular social media tool in China. We listed some recruitment criteria to employ ideal participants. First, participants should have working experience. Second, they should ensure their immediate leaders to participate in our survey.

We collected data with two measurement points and a time lag of two weeks to decrease common method bias (Conway & Lance, 2010). Before the survey, we informed participants about our research purposes and guaranteed that their responses would be kept confidential. At Time 1, followers answered questions regarding their demographic information (i.e., age, gender, education level, and work tenure, leader humility, and follower moqi. At the same time, their immediate leaders evaluated follower humility and their demographic information (i.e., age, gender, education level, and leader tenure). At Time 2, followers were asked to report their knowledge hiding.

After the data collection process, 379 followers and 90 of their direct leaders participated in our survey. At Time 1, 352 (92.88%) followers and 88 (97.78%) group leaders completed our survey. At Time 2, 326 followers and 88 group leaders completed the survey. After matching data from Time 1 and Time 2 as well as eliminating missing data, 315 followers nested in 88 team leaders finished our survey, with effective response rates of 83.1% for followers and 97.78 for team leaders. For followers, the final sample included 56.2% male, and 43.8% female followers, the average age was 30.84, and the majority of their work tenure was ranged from less than one year (29.5%), 1–3 years (38.7%), and 4–6 years (21.0%). Regarding education level, 14.3% of their degree was a junior college or lower degree, 51.7% was bachelor degree, and 34.0% was master or higher degree. For team leaders, most of them were male (68.6%) and were aged 25–35 years (54.3%) and 36–45 years (28.9%). For leader tenure, the majority of them have 1–6 years of work experience as leaders (38.4% for 1–3 years and 34.3% for 4–6 years). Concerning education level, most of them have a bachelor's or master's degree (39.4% and 35.6% respectively).

Measures

The questionnaires were conducted in Chinese, and items were back-translated following the procedure recommended by Brislin (1980). The total items were measured on a six-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree).

Leader Humility Followers rated leader humility by using the nine-item scale developed by Owens et al. (2013). A sample item is "My immediate leader takes notice of others' strengths." (Cronbach's alpha = .93).

Follower Moqi We measured follower moqi by using the eight-item instrument from Zheng et al. (2019a). Before these eight items are shown, we highlighted one sentence: In day-to-day work situations, without explicit verbal communication or overt cues from my supervisor. Sample items include "I can understand my immediate leader's task requirements at work." and "I can cooperate with my immediate leader at work." (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

Follower Humility Leaders evaluated follower humility by using the nine-item scale developed by Owens et al. (2013). A sample item is "This follower takes notice of others' strengths." (Cronbach's alpha = .86).

Knowledge Hiding We assessed knowledge hiding with a 12-item scale developed by Connelly et al. (2012). Sample items include "I agreed to help other members of my team but never really intended to." (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

Control Variables Given follower gender, age, education level, and work tenure influenced knowledge hiding behavior (e.g., Bogilović et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2019; Škerlavaj et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2020), we controlled these demographical variables. This is also consistent with prior studies (i.e., Škerlavaj et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2020) which also chose to control follower gender, age, education level, and work tenure. Follower gender was coded as: 1 = male, 2 = female; age was coded as: 1 = < '25', 2 = '25–35', 3 = '36–45', 4 > = '46'; education level was coded as: 1 = high school or lower degrees, 2 = junior college degrees, 3 = bachelor degrees, 4 = master degrees, 5 = doctoral degree; work tenure was coded as: 1 = '< 1', 2 = '1–3', 3 = '4–6', 4 = '7–10', 5 = '> = 11'. Besides, we also controlled direct leaders' demographical information including leader gender, age, education level, and leader tenure because of their potential influence on employee knowledge hiding. Specifically, Connelly and Zweig (2015) suggested that employees are easier to engage in knowledge hiding behavior when their leaders hide knowledge from them. And leader gender, age, education level, and leader tenure can influence the degree that leaders' knowledge hiding behavior. Specifically, Offergelt et al. (2019) proposed that individuals who are women, have lower education, and have longer work tenure are less likely to engage in knowledge hiding behavior. Besides, Pan et al. (2016) suggested that individuals with increased age tend to reduce knowledge hiding behavior. Thus, we also controlled for leaders' demographical information. Leader gender was coded as: 1 = male, 2 = female; age was self-reported in years; education level was coded as: 1 = high

school or lower degrees, 2 = junior college degrees, 3 = bachelor degrees, 4 = master degrees, 5 = doctoral degree; leader tenure was coded as: 1 = '< 1', 2 = '1–3', 3 = '4–6', 4 = '7–10', 5 = '> = 11'.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities. The correlations were significant between leader humility and follower moqi (r = .23, $p < .01$), as well as between follower humility and follower moqi (r = .13, p < .01). The results also revealed moderate correlations between the mediating mechanisms and the outcomes, follower moqi was negatively related to knowledge hiding (r = −.13, p < .01). The results provided rudimentary support for H2, which stated that leader humility has a negative effect on knowledge hiding through follower moqi.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses and Common Method Bias Testing

The confirmatory factor analysis was performed in Mplus 7.4 to test the measurement model (see Table 2). The four-factor congenic model (χ^2/df = 2.33, p < .01, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .07, CFI = .91, TLI = .90) was an acceptable fit to data, supported the construct validity of our focal variables. And the χ^2 difference tests illustrated that the four-factor congenic model fits significantly better than any alternative nested models, indicating the common method variance (CMV) was not an issue in the present study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, we also conducted Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) to test the common method variance. The result showed that only 33.78% of the common variance was accounted for by a single factor, which is less than 40%, indicating the common method variance (CMV) was not a major issue in the present study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Hypotheses Tests

We examined the whole model through path analysis, using Mplus 7.4, results are presented in Fig. 1. All the hypothesized relationships were supported by the data. Specifically, the path from leader humility to follower moqi was positive and significant (β = .20, p < .01, SE = .06), thereby Hypothesis 1 was supported. While the path from follower moqi to knowledge hiding was negatively significant (β = −.15, p < .01, SE = .06), supporting the possibility of the mediated effect. Figure 1 also summarized the moderating effects of follower humility. It did moderate the relationship between leader humility and follower moqi (β = .11, $p < .05$, SE = .05), providing initial support for Hypothesis 3.

Figure 2 depicted the interaction plot based on values plus and minus one standard deviation from the mean of the follower humility. The slope was significant when follower humility was high (simple slope coefficient = .33, p < .01) while it was not significant when follower humility is low (simple slope coefficient = .09, p = n.s.), and the two slopes were significantly different from each other (b = .24, p < .05), supporting Hypothesis 3.

Because the distribution of indirect effects is skewed in most cases, we used bias-corrected bootstrapping following Preacher and Hayes (2008) procedure to test the indirect effect of leader humility on knowledge hiding via follower moqi (shown in Table 3). As the confidence interval of the indirect

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Leader Gender	–	–	–											
2. Leader Age	–	–	.18**	–										
3. Leader Education	3.07	1.01	.08	−.34**	–									
4. Leader Tenure	2.92	1.09	.28**	.33**	−.02	–								
5. Follower Gender	–	–	.04	.19**	.13*	.05	–							
6. Follower Age	30.84	6.13	.04	−.06	−.18**	−.09	−.02	–						
7. Follower Education	3.23	0.75	−.03	.02	−.03	−.06	−.11*	.17**	–					
8. Follower Tenure	2.15	1.01	.11**	.11	.22**	.16*	−.08	−.01	−.22**	–				
9. Leader Humility	4.79	0.87	.00	.06	.03	.13*	.03	−.07	.05	.12*	(.93)			
10. Follower Humility	4.62	0.61	−.03	.04	.13*	.07	.07	−.23**	.03	.08	.05	(.86)		
11. Follower Moqi	4.15	0.92	.15**	.12*	.13*	.24**	.10	−.19**	−.22**	.27**	.23**	.13**	(.90)	
12. Knowledge Hiding	2.91	0.97	−.02	.09	−.16**	−.04	.02	.05	−.05	−.00	−.08	−.03	−.13**	(.88)

Note: $N = 315$; Alpha reliabilities are presented in parenthesis; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed

Table 2 Confirmatory Factor Analyses

CFA model	χ^2/df	$\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df$	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI
4 factors: LH, FH, FM, KH	855.51/367	–	.06	.07	.91	.90
3 factors: LH+FH, FM, KH	1701.83/370	282.11**	.11	.13	.74	.72
2 factors: LH+FH+FM, KH	2893.07/372	407.51**	.15	.17	.51	.47
1 factor: LH+FH+FM+KH	3182.02/373	387.75**	.16	.18	.45	.41

Note: $N = 315$; ** $p < .01$; LH = Leader Humility; FH = Follower Humility; FM = Follower Moqi; KH = Knowledge Hiding

effect of leader humility on knowledge hiding via follower moqi did not include zero (estimate = −.03; 95% CI = [−.07, −.01]), Hypothesis 2 was supported. Further, we tested the conditional indirect effect using bias-corrected bootstrapping. Our results above showed that follower humility significantly moderated the relationship between leader humility and follower moqi, thus we tested the first-stage moderated-mediation model. Specifically, the indirect effect was significant at high (estimate = −.05; 95% CI = [−0.11, −0.01]) nor at low (estimate = −.01; 95% CI = [−.05, .01]) levels of follower humility, with the difference between the two effects (estimate = −.04; 95% CI = [−.10, −.00]) being significant, supporting Hypothesis 4. The results revealed that follower humility strengthens the negative effect of leader humility on knowledge hiding through follower moqi.

Discussion

Given follower moqi highlights the proactive role of followers played in managerial processes, follower moqi has attracted recent researchers' attention (i.e., Zheng et al., 2019a; Zheng et al., 2019b; Li et al., 2020). Thus far, a small but emerging research has examined the impact of follower moqi on trust in leader, insider status, goal clarity, reward recommendations, task performance, and knowledge sharing (e.g., Zheng et al., 2019a; Zheng et al., 2019b; Li et al., 2020). Besides, Zheng et al. (2019a) tested the influence of follower feedback-seeking behavior on follower moqi. However, prior studies ignored investigating the effect of follower moqi on knowledge hiding and the role of leadership played in developing follower moqi. Drawing from SIP theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990), we explored how and when follower moqi is increased by treating leader humility as the independent variable and follower humility as the contingency factor; what's the influence of follower moqi by choosing knowledge hiding as the dependent variable. Our research offers several contributions to follower moqi, leader humility, knowledge hiding literature, and SIP theory.

Theoretical Implications

Our research helps to contribute to a small but emerging follower moqi literature by exploring its predicators as well as outcomes. First, we contributed to follower moqi's antecedents by exploring the leader humility's impact on follower moqi from a leader-perspective. To the best of our knowledge, only Zheng et al. (2019a) and Wang et al. (2018b) explored follower moqi's antecedents from a follower perspective. They proposed that follower feedback-seeking behavior is positively related to follower moqi. However, the development of follower moqi also relates to leadership (Zheng et al., 2019a). Answering the call from Zheng et al. (2019a) to investigate the influence of leadership in promoting follower moqi, we studied the influence of leader humility on

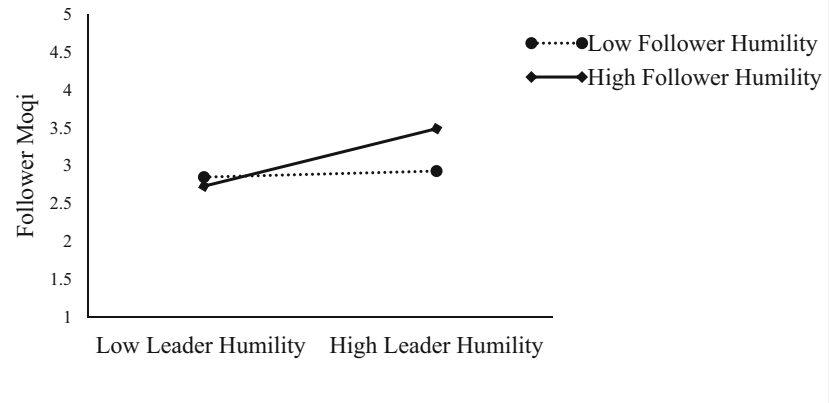

Fig. 2 represents the moderating effect of follower humility in the relationship between leader humility and follower moqi. (1) Low follower humility means the values of follower humility are lower than one standard deviation below the means. (2) High follower humility means the values of follower humility are higher than one standard deviation above the means

Table 3 Results of Bootstrapping Test

Effect	Estimator	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Level	Upper Level
Mediating Model of Follower Moqi				
Direct Effect	−.02	.07	−.15	.11
Indirect Effect	−.03	.02	−.07	−.01
Moderated Mediation Model				
Low (M-SD)	−.01	.02	−.05	.01
High (M+SD)	−.05	.03	−.11	−.01
Difference	−.04	.03	−.10	−.00

Note: $N = 315$; Bootstrap = 5000. The value "-.00" at Upper Level is the approximate number of "-.004"

follower moqi, which enriched understandings of the development of follower moqi further.

Second, our model contributes to follower moqi's outcomes by introducing knowledge hiding as the dependent variable. By reviewing previous research related to follower moqi, we found that these limited studies tested the positive impacts of follower moqi on followers' trust in leader (Li et al., 2020), insider status, and knowledge sharing (Zheng et al., 2019b), goal clarity and reward recommendations (Zheng et al., 2019a), and task performance (Wang et al., 2018b; Zheng et al., 2019a). But these existent studies ignored to test follower moqi' influence on knowledge hiding. Showing the negative influence of follower moqi on knowledge hiding helps to expand our understandings of the outcomes of follower moqi. Knowledge hiding is a kind of unethical behavior (Pan et al., 2016). By showing that follower moqi can reduce knowledge hiding, we further find that follower moqi has the potential to reduce unethical behavior, such as knowledge hiding. At the same time, the negative association of follower moqi on knowledge hiding also contributes to research about knowledge hiding. Among few studies which explored knowledge hiding's predictors, they mainly proposed interpersonal variables as the antecedents (Connelly et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2019). It is a pity that they did not realize that followers play an active role in reducing knowledge hiding when followers have deeper understandings of leaders' desires and expectations. Then, our findings of the negative impact of follower moqi on knowledge hiding help to deepen our understandings of knowledge hiding's antecedents.

Third, our model expands the conditions under which follower moqi is increased or inhibited by treating follower humility as the moderator between leader humility and follower moqi. Zheng et al. (2019a) stated that followers with high power distance and face consciousness (i.e., individuals' expectation to offer and maintain a favorable image of oneself; Zheng et al., 2019a, p 963), two China cultural concepts, are easier to increase follower moqi. However, they neglected to test the influence of follower difference, a general and non-cultural construct, on follower moqi's development. Zheng et al. (2019a) suggested that follower moqi not only exists in Eastern countries but also in Western contexts. By illustrating that the fit between leader trait and follower trait is helpful to increase follower moqi, we provided further empirical evidence that follower moqi generates and develops across countries.

Finally, our study contributes to SIP theory by treating follower moqi as the mechanism linking leader humility to knowledge hiding. Previous studies that adopted SIP theory as the theoretical framework mainly used psychological states (e.g., relational energy and emotional exhaustion) or cognitive processes (e.g., followers' perspective taking) as the mechanism linking leadership to employees' behaviors (e.g., Wang et al., 2018a; Wang et al., 2017), neglecting the underlying mechanism of follower moqi. Indeed, if followers' attitudes and behaviors are influenced by leaders, one premise is that they understand leaders' underlying expectations or requirements, that is follower moqi. Our study realized this premise and enriched SIP theory by stressing a new mechanism (i.e., follower moqi) that links information sources (e.g., leaders) to behaviors of information receivers (e.g., followers).

Practical Implications

Our findings have practical implications for business practitioners. First, our results show that leader humility reduces knowledge hiding via follower moqi. Decreased knowledge hiding benefits organizations' overall performance (Connelly et al., 2012). Thus, organizations should emphasize the importance of leader humility. Given leader humility is a modifiable trait that can be increased by training programs (Owens et al., 2015; Ma et al., 2020), organizations can provide them with some training and guidance that aim at developing humility as a managerial trait.

Second, our research indicates that follower moqi helps to reduce knowledge hiding. Prior research mostly suggested a good relationship with leaders is helpful to decrease knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2019). However, they did not realize that followers play an active role in reducing knowledge hiding when followers have deeper understandings of leaders' desires and expectations. Given the importance of follower moqi, we suggest organizations should pay attention to follower moqi and provide some training or guidelines which help to increase follower moqi. Specifically, on the one hand, organizations should encourage leaders to express their expectations, desires, and intentions actively to employees. On the other hand, organizations should encourage employees to seek feedback from leaders which is beneficial to increase follower moqi (Zheng et al., 2019a).

Third, our study shows that follower humility strengthens the positive influence of leader humility on follower moqi, implying that the development of follower moqi is not only related to leader humility but also related to follower humility. Thus, organizations should pay attention to the value of follower humility. In order to improve follower humility, organizations can provide some training programs to followers and encourage them to engage in certain behaviors, such as appreciating others, learning from others, and admitting ones' limitations and mistakes. In addition, our results indicate follower moqi may be enhanced because of followers' similar traits with leaders. This implies to HR departments that they should consider how well a follower's trait matches the immediate leader's trait in the process of internal personnel transfer or recruiting new team members for a team.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has serval limitations. First, we only tested the influence of leader humility, a bottom-to-up leadership, on follower moqi. Future studies should test the up-to-bottom leadership's influence on follower moqi, such as authority leadership. Authority leadership tends to directly tell followers what they should do and not do (Chiang et al., 2020), which may also increase follower moqi. It will be more interesting to compare the difference for the influence of these two different leadership styles (i.e., leader humility and authority leadership) on follower moqi; illustrate different mechanisms linking these two leadership styles to follower moqi.

Second, we showed the moderating role of follower humility played in the relationship between leader humility and follower moqi. In addition to follower humility, followers' other characteristics can also moderate the positive effect of leader humility on follower moqi. For example, political skill, "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2007, p. 331), may strengthen the positive impact of leader humility on follower moqi. As suggested by Treadway et al. (2013), politically skilled individuals are acutely aware of the social context within which they operate and good at making accurate judgments about others' social motives. Then, it is possible for these followers to increase moqi with leaders. Thus, further research can explore the moderating role of political skill for the relationship between leader humility and follower moqi.

Third, we found the negative influence of follower moqi on knowledge hiding, but we did not explore the conditions for this association. High-level follower moqi represents these followers' sense of more expectations and intensions of superiors. However, knowing leaders better does not represent that followers have the motivation to benefit leaders. Instead, those followers who have higher moqi with leaders may take advantage of moqi and engage in behaviors that benefit themselves. Thus, in order to know more about the influence of follower moqi on followers' behaviors, future research should explore this relationship under some specific contexts, such as follower Machiavellianism (i.e., a personality trait that pursue self-interests reflects individuals' distrustful and cynical understandings of human nature, Christie & Geis, 1970). In particular, followers with Machiavellianism may take advantage of follower moqi and use it for self-interests instead of reducing knowledge hiding.

Finally, our research has a limitation of the inability to establish causality. We propose our model based on SIP theory and choose time-lagged surveys to test our model, which are beneficial to mitigate the concerns of reverse causality to some degree. Even though, we still suggest future research to test our model with a longitudinal experiment, so as to confirm the causal relationship between leader humility and knowledge hiding. In addition, we also call for future research regarding follower moqi to collect data from western countries. Follower moqi may also exist in Western countries (Zheng et al., 2019a). Although our research infers that moqi has the potential be existed in Western cultures by testing the interactive effect of leader humility and follower humility on it, it will be more effective to support that if we test our model with samples from Western countries. In doing this, we can enrich moqi literature by confirming whether moqi exists in western countries or not.

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Data Availability The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

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.

Ethics Approval 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.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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