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**Hindering Talented Employees’ Internal Mobility: Managers’ Territorial Response to Stress**

**Abstract**

**Purpose** – Integrating territoriality and the job demands-resources model, we investigated tactics that managers use to hinder their talented employees’ internal job transfer attempts. We proposed that managers’ psychological ownership of talent would relate to their use of persuasion and nurturing tactics, and that managers’ role overload and job social support would moderate these relationships.

**Design/methodology/approach –** We collected the data by administering two surveys approximately two weeks apart. A hundred and sixteen managers provided complete data for analysis.

**Findings –** Psychological ownership of talent related to persuasion tactics but not nurturing tactics. When overload was higher and social support was lower, managers with higher psychological ownership reported using more persuasion tactics to hinder their talented employees’ internal mobility. We did not find significant interactions for nurturing tactics.

**Practical implications –** Internal talent hindering can impede employee access to critical learning and growth opportunities, and employees who feel their mobility is restricted may be more inclined to turnover. Accordingly, managers who hinder talented employees’ internal mobility can negatively affect leadership development within an organization and the effectiveness of its succession plans.

**Originality/value** –We demonstrate empirically that managers intentionally use tactics to hinder the internal transfers of their talented employees. We identify predictors and boundary conditions of hindering tactics, and this knowledge can help organizations address internal talent hindering.

**Keywords**Talent hoarding, managerial hindering tactics, territoriality, psychological ownership of talent, job demands-resources

**Paper type** Research Paper

**Introduction**

The competition between organizations to attract and retain talented employees is fierce (Michaels et al., 2001). Talented employees are those who are performing at a high level and who are perceived to have potential to advance into higher levels of responsibility within the organization (Silzer and Church 2009). In addition to the competition between organizations for talented employees, researchers have suggested that some managers are working to retain employees within their own work-unit instead of helping them secure promotions or transfers elsewhere in their organization (Gardner et al., 2018; Molina, 2016). We refer to this managerial action as internal talent hindering.

Internal talent hindering can be problematic at both the individual and organizational level. For instance, talent hindering can impair talented employees’ development by not giving them critical learning and advancement opportunities (Yost and Plunkett 2010). Furthermore, employees are more inclined to turnover when they feel their mobility is restricted within their organization (Silzer and Church 2010). In short, hindering talented employees’ internal mobility limits leadership development and effective succession planning. Accordingly, it is important to understand why managers engage in this seemingly dysfunctional behaviour.

Despite the possible negative consequences of talent hindering within organizations, studies investigating this behaviour are rare, particularly in an internal context. However, one key finding from this emerging area of research is the association between psychological ownership and talent hindering. Specifically, Gardner et al. (2018) found that managers who had stronger feelings of ownership of their subordinates were more inclined to use defensive tactics to prevent these employees from leaving the organization. We endeavour to extend this research by investigating whether and how managers hinder the internal transfer attempts of their talented employees, and the boundary conditions that may exacerbate managers’ territorial tendencies.

Managerial roles are thought to be inherently stressful (Campbell et al., 2007). We propose that the stress managers experience in their work environment is a germane boundary condition to better understand their behaviour. There has been a growing interest in understanding stress as a predictor of broad leadership styles such as transformational leadership behaviours (Harms et al., 2017). However, there is less known about how stress and manager behaviours operate in the context of talent management-related processes such as managers’ internal talent hindering behaviours. In this research, we draw from the job demands-resources model of stress (Demerouti et al., 2001) to hypothesize the interaction between managers’ psychological ownership of talent, role overload (a job demand), and job social support (a job resource) and its relationship with tactics managers use to hinder their talented employees’ internal transfer attempts.

**Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

We begin by outlining the key terms that we used in this research which include internal transfer attempts, talent hindering, and persuasion and nurturing tactics. We aligned our definition of internal transfer attempts with Dineen et al. (2011) conceptualization to include situations where a talented employee is thinking about or has applied for a new position in the same organization but working in a different workgroup for a different manager. We defined talent hindering as actions that managers take to hold back, interfere, or make slow or difficult the progress of talented employees’ internal transfer attempts (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Finally, although there are a range of tactics that managers may use to hinder internal transfer attempts, Gardner et al. (2018) have found two key categories of tactics, namely persuasion and nurturing tactics. Persuasion tactics are direct behaviours that focus on employee retention. Examples of persuasion tactics include asking employees directly if they are considering other job opportunities or providing negative information about other job opportunities. In contrast, nurturing tactics are behaviours that are intended to create positive perceptions of the work environment, and in turn, increase the likelihood of employee retention. Examples of nurturing tactics include being helpful to the employee or praising their good work. In this study, we explore managers’ use of these same hindering tactics but in an internal transfer context and with talented employees as the target.

*Psychological Ownership and Territoriality*

To develop our hypotheses, we draw from psychological ownership and territoriality theory to explain managers’ talent hindering behaviours. Psychological ownership has been defined as a state of mind “in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (material or immaterial in nature) or a piece of it is ‘theirs’” (Pierce et al., 2001, p. 299). A high degree of psychological ownership of possessions generates territorial behaviours. Territoriality has been defined as ‘an individual’s behavioural expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object’ (Brown et al., 2005, p. 578). Brown and colleagues have suggested that individuals engage in territorial behaviours when they perceive that a target of ownership provides them with benefits. Given that talented employees provide managers with benefits such as contributing significantly to their work-unit’s performance (Call et al., 2015), some managers may feel a strong sense of psychological ownership for their talented employees and engage in territorial tactics to prevent them from leaving the work-unit (i.e., internal talent hindering).

Indeed, research has shown that there is an association between psychological ownership and territorial behaviours within organizations. For instance, felt psychological ownership can prompt employees to hide knowledge from their colleagues who could use it (Huo et al., 2016), and prompt managers to use tactics to prevent their subordinates from taking new positions at different organizations (Gardner et al., 2018). Thus, we propose that psychological ownership may similarly promote territorial behaviour in the context of the internal transfer attempts of talented employees. We hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* Managers’ psychological ownership of their talented employees will be positively associated with their use of persuasion and nurturing tactics to hinder internal transfer attempts.

*The Moderating Role of Stress*

Gardner et al. (2018) established thatmanagers’ psychological ownership of their employees is associated with their use of persuasion and nurturing tactics. However, it is important to recognize boundary conditions that may alter these relationships. In this research, we focus on managerial stress as a pertinent boundary condition for two main reasons. First, managers often report feeling stressed at work citing that they are overloaded and that they do not have the resources to manage their stress effectively (Campbell et al., 2007). Second, a manager’s stress can impair their decision making and promote negative behaviours such as abusive supervision (Ganster 2005; Harms et al., 2017). Thus, it is critical to understand the role of stress in managerial talent hindering.

This research approaches stress in relation to the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. Central tenets of the JD-R model are that stress occurs when job demands outweigh job resources, and the resulting stress can significantly impact an individuals’ job-related outcomes such as burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands are referred to as the ‘physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort,’ whereas job resources refer to aspects of the job that either help to achieve work goals, reduce job demands and their psychological costs, or promote psychological growth and development (Bakker et al., 2005, p. 170). In this research, we integrate territoriality theory and the JD-R model to explore the interplay between job demands and resources and how it may alter the relationship between psychological ownership and internal talent hindering. Specifically, we focus on how managers’ psychological ownership of their talent may interact with role overload (a job demand) and job social support (a job resource) to influence their use of persuasion and nurturing tactics.

When job demands outweigh resources (i.e., when stress is occurring), employees’ health and energy become depleted, and behaviours become dysfunctional to cope with these feelings of stress. For instance, employees’ time demands have been associated with their knowledge hiding behaviours when their personal resources are low (Škerlavaj et al., 2018). In relation to managers, they often deal with competing demands for their time and attention. For example, managers must complete their own work tasks while concurrently spending time and energy to support and monitor their subordinates (Li et al., 2018) and interacting with their superiors (Anicich and Hirsh, 2017). Consequently, managers report a high incidence of role overload (Arnold et al., 2017). When managers are experiencing stress in their roles, Liang et al. (2016) demonstrated that their behaviour becomes dysfunctional and suggested that their behavioural reactions are often an automatic response to maintain control of situations when their resources are depleted. In short, high job demands and lower job resources can create a stressful situation for managers that can prompt negative workplace behaviours.

Applying these findings to managers’ internal talent hindering, we propose that stress, typified by high job demands and low job resources, creates a defensive posture where managers’ behaviours become aimed at shorter-term benefits. In the context of talent hindering, a manager who experiences high levels of job stress may resort to using talent hindering tactics to avoid incurring additional job demands and losing current job resources. For example, a departing talented employee can increase a manager’s job demands by requiring them to spend time to hire and train a replacement employee. At the same time, the departing talented employee can also reduce a manager’s job resources as turnover of high performing employees has been shown to have a negative effect on a work-unit’s subsequent performance (Call et al., 2015). As a result of the stress a manager may experience when a talented employee is thinking about leaving the work-unit, their focus may be constrained to the short-term, and they may not thoroughly consider the possible longer-term negative ramifications of their behaviour (Knudsen et al., 2009) such as hindering their talented employees’ development. Taken together, managers with a higher degree of psychological ownership of their employees are more inclined to resort to straightforward and defensive behaviours such as persuasion tactics to retain their employees (Gardner et al., 2018). Moreover, stress can also induce managers to engage in dysfunctional behaviours to maintain control of their work situation (Liang et al., 2016). Therefore, based on territoriality theory and the JD-R model, we hypothesize that managers who experience stress in their roles and who hold stronger feelings of psychological ownership for their talent will be inclined to protect their talent by using more persuasion tactics to keep them from leaving the work-unit.

*Hypothesis 2:* The positive relationship between a manager’s psychological ownership of their talented employees and their use of persuasion tactics will be strongest when managers’ role overload is higher, and their job social support is lower.

Although there is a concrete theoretical rationale for the proposition that the relationship between psychological ownership of talent and persuasion tactics becomes amplified by the boundary condition of high stress (i.e., higher job demands and lower job resources), it is less clear how stress impacts a manager’s use of nurturing tactics. Persuasion tactics are explicit and directly relate to reducing the threat of losing an employee. In contrast, nurturing tactics focus indirectly on employee retention by making the employee feel good or making the working environment more appealing to the employee. We suggest that managers will use nurturing tactics less frequently under conditions of higher stress given that these tactics require more energy, focus, and longer-term thinking. However, a competing argument is that stress does not alter the relationship between managers’ psychological ownership of their talented employees and nurturing tactics. In a high stress work environment, losing a talented employee, or spending time and energy to retain a talented employee through time-intensive nurturing tactics may be a secondary concern for a manager. Instead, managers who are experiencing a high level of stress may be more preoccupied with other job-related concerns such as securing resources for the work-unit. For example, if a manager’s immediate concern is becoming short-staffed, then they may spend more time on selecting and training new employees versus courting their talented employee. Thus, in addition to examining the two central hypotheses, we consider the outcome of nurturing tactics in relation to role overload, job social support, and managers’ psychological ownership of talent as an exploratory research question.

**Materials and Methods**

**Procedure and Participants**

We used EKOS’ Probit panel to recruit participants for a time-lagged online study. The Probit panel consists of approximately 90,000 Canadians. To become a Probit panel member, Probit uses a list of randomly generated phone numbers and uses Interactive Voice Response technology to call prospective members to invite them to join the panel. If a prospective member expresses interest in joining the panel, then a Probit recruiter contacts the prospective member to explain the panel in more detail (e.g., privacy policies) and collect demographic information. In short, Probit panel members must be invited to join the panel and they are verified by a Probit recruiter over the phone at the time of enrolment. Probit periodically sends its members email invitations to surveys, often no more than once a month. Although some Probit surveys offer incentives to members for their participation, we did not offer financial remuneration for completing this study. Participation was voluntary.

To recruit panel members for this study, Probit sent e-mails with the survey link to 72,950 of its members. To qualify for the survey, panel members had to meet several criteria. Specifically, they had to be working full-time in a managerial position for at least a year, in an organization with at least 50 employees, and supervising at least two employees with significant authority to hire, fire, promote, transfer, or make work assignments for these employees. Panel members also had to be currently supervising talented employees which was defined as high performing employees and or employees with high potential for more advanced roles in their organization. Finally, panel members had to report having the opportunity to hinder their employees’ internal transfer attempts.

Of the 5,249 panel members who attempted to complete the Time 1 survey, 3,688 did not meet the screening criteria, and 1,349 dropped out of the survey at various time points (e.g., consent form, screening items, or focal study items). Thus, a total of 212 panel members qualified and completed the Time 1 survey. Approximately two weeks after the Time 1 survey, Probit sent Time 2 recruitment e-mails with the survey link to the 212 managerial panel members who completed the Time 1 survey. Of the 154 managers who returned to complete the Time 2 survey, 137 provided complete data, 14 provided partial data, and 3 dropped out of the survey before providing data. We screened the data for quality at both time points. Specifically, we removed cases when a manager failed an attention check item, when their survey completion time was faster than 40% of the median, or when they had consecutive response strings that were 3*SD* above the mean. Based on these data quality screening criteria, we retained the data from 116 managers for analysis.

The final set of managers were predominantly Caucasian (91%) men (65%), who were on average 53 years old (*SD* = 8.0) with 8.1 years (*SD* = 7.0) of tenure in their current position and 14.6 years (*SD* = 9.7) of tenure in their current organization. Most of the managers worked in organizations of 1000 or more employees, and 53% were middle managers, 43% were frontline managers, and 4% were senior leaders. These managers worked for public (53%), private (41%), and not-for profit (6%) organizations. They held positions in various industries with the most common being Government (21%), Manufacturing (13%), and Health Care and Social Assistance (12%). Lastly, the median number of direct reports for these managers was 12 employees.

The length of each survey was approximately 15 minutes. To ensure that the managers understood the key terminology in this study, before starting the Time 1 survey, they were required to read the definitions of the key terms which included talented employees, work-unit, internal transfers, internal transfer attempts, and hindering. Each key term and its associated definition were provided on a separate webpage where managers had to indicate that they had read and understood each definition. If a manager did not remember a definition for a key term, they were given the option to ‘Click to view definitions’ on each survey webpage where one of these key terms appeared. At Time 2, managers were reminded of the definitions, and again, they could ‘Click to view’ the definitions if needed.

**Measures**

We adapted the psychological ownership and persuasion and nurturing tactic scales to centre on talented employees. We also instructed managers to consider the talented employees who they supervise in their current managerial role. Each stem began with ‘In your current managerial role…,’ and ended with ‘talented employees who you supervise.’

*Time 1 Variables*

*Psychological ownership of talent*.We adapted Gardner et al. (2018) four-item psychological ownership of subordinates scale (α = .60) using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) ‘Strongly disagree’ to (7) ‘Strongly agree.’ Sample items include ‘I feel a high degree of ownership toward my talented employees,’ and ‘It is important that other managers check with me before using my talented employees for assignments outside of my work-unit.’

*Role overload*. We measured role overload with Bolino and Turnley’s (2005) three-item scale (α = .91). Using a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) ‘Strongly disagree’ to (5) ‘Strongly agree,’ participants responded to the following items: ‘It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do,’ ‘The amount of work I am expected to do is too great,’ and ‘I never seem to have enough time to get everything done at work.’

*Job social support*. We used Van Yperen and Hagedoorn’s (2003) four-item measure of instrumental support on the job (α = .81). The targets of the items were the manager’s immediate supervisor and other managers in their organization. Managers responded to the following questions using a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) ‘Strongly disagree’ to (5) ‘Strongly agree:’ ‘Can you rely upon your [immediate supervisor/other managers] when things get tough at work?’ and ‘If necessary, can you ask your [immediate supervisor/other managers] you work with for help?’

*Time 2 Variables*

Gardner et al. (2018) developed a 13-item employee guarding scale to assess tactics that managers use to prevent their employees from leaving to an outside organization. The employee guarding scale includes a persuasion and nurturing dimension. For this study, we adapted these scale items to reflect an internal versus an external context, and to centre on talented employees. We measured persuasion and nurturing tactics using a five-point Likert frequency scale ranging from (1) ‘Never’ to (5) ‘Almost always.’ Managers were instructed to consider the tactics that they have used to hinder the internal transfer attempts of their talented employees. They responded to items with the following stem: ‘In your current managerial role, how often have you used the following practices with the **INTENTION** of hindering the internal transfer attempts of talented employees who you are supervising?’

It is important to note that Gardner et al. (2018) developed and refined the employee guarding tactic scales from an initial set of 74 items. The initial 74-items covered various tactics from the influence and mate guarding literatures. Using a multi-study approach, Gardner and colleagues removed 34 items because fewer than 70% of respondents indicated that they had ever used the tactic. An additional 23 items were removed in Study 2 and 3 for statistical reasons (i.e., cross-loadings or factor loadings less than 0.30). In short, the employee guarding scales represent common tactics that managers’ report using to hinder mobility attempts of their employees. That is, the scales are not exhaustive, and there are many other tactics that managers may use when hindering their employees’ mobility attempts.

*Persuasion tactics*.Sample items that we adapted from Gardner et al. (2018) eight-item employee guarding persuasion scale (α = .83) include “I have told a talented employee that another department was not a ‘good place to work’,” and ‘I have asked a talented employee if he or she was seriously seeking internal job opportunities.’

*Nurturing tactics*. Sample items that we adapted from Gardner et al. (2018) five-item employee guarding nurturing scale (α = .90) include ‘I have gone out of my way to be kind and caring toward a talented employee,’ and ‘I have publicly praised a talented employee for his or her work.’

*Control Variable*

We included a measure of subjective norms as a control variable, collected at Time 1, because managers may be more inclined to hinder the internal transfer attempts of their talented employees when they believe that it is acceptable and common among managers in their organization. To measure subjective norms, we adapted three items from Ajzen’s (n.d.) sample theory of planned behaviour questionnaire (α = .60). The items were: ‘It is expected of me to hinder these attempts,’ ‘Most people whose opinions I value at work would approve of me hindering these attempts,’ and ‘At work, most managers I know hinder these attempts.’

**Analysis and Results**

After standardizing the variables, we tested the hypotheses with hierarchical multiple regression analysis using PROCESS version 3.1 in SPSS (Hayes, 2018). We regressed persuasion and nurturing tactics separately on the control and focal variables. In Step 1, we entered subjective norms, and in Step 2, we added psychological ownership, role overload, and job social support. In Step 3, we added the three two-way interaction terms into the equation, and in Step 4 the three-way interaction term was included.

The descriptive statistics and correlations are in Table I and the results of the regression analyses are in Table II.

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Insert Table I and II

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Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. After entering subjective norms, managers with higher psychological ownership of talent reported using more persuasion tactics (β = 0.20, *p* = .03), whereas the relationship between psychological ownership of talent and nurturing tactics was not significant, albeit in the hypothesized direction (β = 0.15, *p* = .11).

Hypothesis 2 outlined that managers would use more persuasion tactics when their psychological ownership of talent and their role overload are both higher and when their job social support is lower. Indeed, the three-way interaction relating to persuasion tactics was significant (β = -0.21, *p* = .04). This three-way interaction accounted for an additional 3% of the variance in persuasion tactics for a total of 24%.

To explore the form of the significant three-way interaction for persuasion tactics, we graphed the higher and lower levels of each variable at ±1*SD*. The simple slopes are plotted and shown in Figure 1. The results of the simple slope tests suggest that the effect of managers’ psychological ownership of talent on their use of persuasion tactics is significant when their role overload is higher and when job social support is lower (β = 0.54, *p* < .001). The other simple slopes were not statistically significant. Thus, the data supports Hypothesis 2.

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Insert Figure 1

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Our research question explored the relationship between managers’ psychological ownership of talent and nurturing tactics under conditions of stress. We did not find a significant three-way interaction (β = -0.11, *p* = .33). That is, the relationship between managers’ psychological ownership of talent and nurturing tactics does not appear to be significantly altered by role overload and job social support. Lastly, it is important to note that the data revealed that subjective norms have a significant relationship with both persuasion and nurturing tactics.

**Discussion**

We investigated the roles of managers’ psychological ownership of talent, role overload, and job social support in relation to their use of talent hindering tactics. We integrated territoriality theory and the JD-R model to propose that managerial work stress is a key boundary condition that may change the relationship between psychological ownership of talent and the tactics managers use to hinder their talented employees’ internal mobility. We found that psychological ownership of talent was related to managers’ use of persuasion tactics but not nurturing tactics. In addition, we found that when managers’ role overload was higher and their job social support was lower, managers with higher psychological ownership of talent reported using more persuasion tactics to hinder their talented employees’ internal transfer attempts. We did not find significant interactions for nurturing tactics. However, we found that managers subjective norms about hindering in their organizations was associated with their reported use of persuasion and nurturing tactics. In the sections that follow, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this research.

**Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the literature on talent hindering in organizations and stress in three main ways. First, despite practitioner interest in talent hoarding within organizations, there is a lack of empirical research to guide practitioner and academic scholars’ understanding of whether and how managers hinder their talented employees’ internal transfer attempts. In this research, we established empirically that managers use persuasion and nurturing tactics to interfere with their talented employees’ internal transfer attempts. Our findings complement Gardner et al. (2018) research which found that managers use persuasion and nurturing tactics to prevent their subordinates from defecting to external organizations. In short, managers use persuasion and nurturing tactics to prevent their subordinates from pursuing both internal and external job opportunities.

Second, this study furthers Dineen et al. (2011) conceptual model of managerial responses to internal transfer attempts by demonstrating that a manager’s decision to hinder will depend on their managerial orientation. This study demonstrates that a manager’s orientation toward their talented employees (i.e., psychological ownership) prompts them to use more persuasion tactics to interfere with their talented employees’ internal transfer attempts. Moreover, this research extends Dineen and colleagues’ conceptual model of managerial responses to internal transfer attempts by highlighting how managers’ perceived norms about hindering in their organizations relate to their use of persuasion and nurturing tactics. We discuss the role of norms further in the practical implications.

Third, this research identifies stress as an important boundary condition to consider in relation to psychological ownership and talent hindering. The findings show that stress can amplify managers’ territoriality over their talented employees. When feeling overloaded in their role and experiencing little job social support, managers who feel higher psychological ownership of their talented employees use more persuasion tactics to prevent internal transfer attempts. In other words, this research provides a better understanding of how individual factors (psychological ownership of talent) interact with the environment (stress) to prompt hindering behaviours. Understanding the role of these factors is critical because talent hindering can have many negative implications for organizations such as prompting turnover and reducing the internal development of high potential employees (Yost and Plunkett, 2010). Accordingly, future research should continue to investigate stress as an antecedent of how managers enact talent management policies and practices.

**Practical Implications**

Talented employees are a vital resource in organizations. This research brings forward several implications for practitioners to consider when trying to prevent or mitigate the opportunity for managers to hinder the internal transfer attempts of their talented employees. Regarding psychological ownership, Pierce et al. (2003) have suggested that norms and rules can create strong situations which can mitigate the influence of psychological ownership on outcomes. For example, to mitigate the likelihood of internal talent hindering, Cohn et al. (2005) outlined how some organizations have instituted talent management practices which require managers to share their higher performing employees with other units in the organization. Cohn and colleagues further outlined how executive leaders such as CEOs and VPs of human resources in these organizations not only encourage and monitor these internal talent development processes, but their compensation is also tied to the movement and development of talented employees. In short, a few initial steps to create talent sharing norms that may ultimately reduce managerial hindering behaviours is for senior leadership to communicate to managers that talent belongs to the organization versus the individual work-unit, and then hold all leaders accountable for the effectiveness of the organization’s internal talent mobility practices.

Given that stress was associated with managers’ use of persuasion tactics, organizations should consider ways to help managers deal with their stressful work environment. In relation to role overload, turnover of employees can change job responsibilities of those who remain and coordination within the work-unit (Kacmar et al., 2006). Therefore, to help reduce managers’ role overload, and in turn their use of persuasion tactics, organizations should consider talent management practices that focus on effectively assessing, preparing, and placing employees across the organization to promptly fill vacancies with capable talent. Relatedly, when internal transitions of talented employees occur, it is critical to provide managers with additional supports to ensure that their work-unit maintains adequate performance levels. Indeed, a key component of managers readily sharing their talent with other units in the organization is that they receive the same level of talent in return (Cohn et al., 2005). Lastly, executive, and senior leaders can support managers with regular communication and encouragement about the value of internal mobility practices and the negative consequences of talent hoarding. For example, Boudreau (2012) have suggested that executives can use a supply-chain metaphor to help managers understand the issues from hoarding material (or talent) when others in the organization would benefit from access to it. While stress may still occur, these considerations can help to minimize managers’ job demands and maintain their resources to avoid negative behaviours such as talent hindering.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that it relied on self-reported data from the perspective of managers. It is possible that common method bias affected the results. However, we followed best practices outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2013) to minimize this issue. For example, we separated the predictor and criterion measures in time, we used validated scales, and we randomized the order of the questions within scales. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial for future research to assess how hindering affects talented employees. For example, Silzer and Church (2010) suggested that employees who perceive that their careers are being hindered are more likely to be dissatisfied and turnover.

Second, we examined persuasion and nurturing tactics that managers direct toward their talented employees. However, there are other tactics that managers could plausibly use to hinder talented employees from internal transfer attempts. For example, managers may choose influence tactics that use other sources of power such as appealing to higher level leaders or other employees to persuade talented employees to remain within the work unit (Yukl et al., 2008). Our focus on persuasion and nurturing tactics was intended to align with, and complement talent hindering research in the context of external transfers (Gardner et al. 2018). Nevertheless, more exploratory research is needed to identify and understand the full range of talent hindering tactics that managers use in relation to talented employee internal transfer attempts.

Third, although the sample included managers from the private sector (41%) and various industries, participants in this study were Canadian managers mainly from the public sector (53%) within Government (21%). Therfore, the applicability of these findings might be most pertinent to a Canadian context. Accordingly, in countries (e.g., United States) or sectors (e.g., Sales) that are more competitive, it might be that managers using persuasion tactics is more pervasive. However, it is our contention that rather than country or sector, the extent to which talent hindering occurs will be more strongly influenced by proximal variables such as organizational norms and HR practices that might exacerbate or mitigate hindering tactics. For example, managers who receive an incentive for developing their talented employees for positions outside of their work-unit might be less likely to engage in hindering tactics, whereas managers whose incentives are tied to work-unit performance might be more inclined to take actions to hinder talented employees from moving internally.

**Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that psychological ownership is associated with managers’ use of persuasion tactics in the context of internal transfers, and that manager stress (i.e., higher role overload and lower job social support) amplifies this relationship. We contribute to the literature by identifying manager stress as a boundary condition to consider in relation to talent hindering behaviour. The findings of this research highlight several factors that are involved in prompting this under-explored and potentially dysfunctional managerial behaviour, and it is an initial step to identify and address the issue of talent hindering in organizations.

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**Table I**

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations for study variables*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. Subjective norms | 2.34 | 1.03 | (.60) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. PsyOwn of talent | 3.98 | 1.13 | .20\* | (.60) |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Role overload | 3.46 | 1.06 | .20\* | .01 | (.91) |  |  |  |
| 4. Job social support | 3.91 | 0.85 | -.35\*\* | -.21\* | -.30\*\* | (.81) |  |  |
| 5. Persuasion tactics | 1.66 | 0.60 | .35\*\* | .26\*\* | .12 | -.13 | (.83) |  |
| 6. Nurturing tactics | 3.18 | 1.24 | .19\* | .19\* | -.03 | -.06 | .59\*\* | (.90) |

*Notes.* *n* = 116. PsyOwn = psychological ownership. Cronbach alphas are in parentheses.

\*\* *p* < .01, \* *p* < .05, *† p* < .10

**Table II**

*Main and interactive effects of psychological ownership of talent, role overload, and job social support on managers’ use of persuasion and nurturing tactics.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Persuasion Tactics* | | | |  | *Nurturing Tactics* | | | |
|  | *Model 1* | *Model 2* | *Model 3* | *Model*  *4* |  | *Model 1* | *Model 2* | *Model 3* | *Model 4* |
| *Control variables* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Subjective norms | .35\*\* | .31\*\* | .29\*\* | .29\*\* |  | .19\* | .18*†* | .19*†* | .19*†* |
| *Main Effects* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PsyOwn |  | .20\* | .23\* | .15 |  |  | .15 | .17*†* | .13 |
| Overload |  | .07 | .12 | .05 |  |  | -.06 | -.05 | -.09 |
| Support |  | .04 | .12 | .07 |  |  | .02 | .07 | .05 |
| *Two-Way Interaction* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PsyOwn × Overload |  |  | .04 | .08 |  |  |  | -.06 | -.04 |
| PsyOwn× Support |  |  | -.15 | -.06 |  |  |  | -.03 | .02 |
| Overload × Support |  |  | -.15 | -.11 |  |  |  | -.11 | -.09 |
| *Three-Way Interaction* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PsyOwn × Overload × Support |  |  |  | -.21\* |  |  |  |  | -.11 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *R2* | .12\*\* | .16\*\* | .21\*\* | .24\*\* |  | .04\* | .06 | .07 | .08 |
| Δ*R2* |  | .04 | .05 | .03\* |  |  | .02 | .01 | .01 |

*Notes.* *n* = 116. PsyOwn = psychological ownership of talent, Overload = role overload, Support = job social support. Coefficients represent standardized Beta coefficients.

\*\* *p* < .01, \* *p* < .05, *† p* < .10

**Figure 1**

*Interaction of psychological ownership of talent × role overload × job social support on managers’ use of persuasion tactics.*