Knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation in the workplace: conceptual foundations, measures, and impacts

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Abstract

Purpose – *This study aims to introduce two novel constructs – knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation – into the knowledge management field to address a theoretical gap concerning the cognitive mechanisms driving knowledge behavior.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This article comprises two studies. Study 1 developed and validated a survey instrument, and Study 2 tested the new constructs within a nomological network of productive and counterproductive knowledge behavior. Data were collected from two samples of 202 and 171 experienced employees via the CloudResearch Connect platform.*

Findings – *On average, employees overstate their professional knowledge by 20% compared to that of their coworkers. Knowledge self-enhancement is a neutral or positive construct because it leads to knowledge hoarding and knowledge sharing, whereas knowledge self-presentation is a negative construct because it triggers knowledge hiding and knowledge sabotage. The effect of knowledge self-enhancement on knowledge self-presentation is amplified by the narcissistic personality trait.*

Practical implications – *Instead of preselecting new workers who do not possess knowledge self-enhancement or attempting to suppress the knowledge self-enhancement of existing employees, managers should prescreen job applicants for possession of the narcissistic personality trait. Managers should identify and remove distractor cues that activate the narcissistic personality trait in their workers. They should also educate their employees about the concept of knowledge self-presentation and its pernicious effects.*

Originality/value – *Knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation are distinct constructs that differ from the other well-established measures tapping into similar cognitive and behavioral domains, namely, socially desirable responding, lying, and overclaiming. This study empirically shows that people's natural tendency to self-enhance their characteristics is also present in the workplace.*

Keywords *Knowledge self-enhancement, Knowledge self-presentation, Narcissistic personality trait, Personality, Knowledge hoarding, Knowledge sharing, Knowledge hiding, Knowledge sabotage*

Paper type *Research paper*

1. Introduction [1]

Dear reader, let us conduct the following experiment. On the scale presented in Figure 1, indicate the level of your professional knowledge compared to that of your coworkers in your current organization. Next, let us assume that every reader of this article does the same and submits the results to the author of this paper for processing. I do not claim clairvoyance, but even before analyzing the data, I can predict what most people – including you – would have chosen: it is definitely above the average and, most likely, around the top 30%, a pattern consistent with the well-known better-than-average or above-

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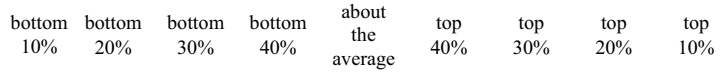
Figure 1 The Knowledge Self-Enhancement Scale



Source: Author's own work

average effect (Alicke and Govorun, 2005; Williams and Gilovich, 2008; Zell *et al.*, 2020; Alicke *et al.*, 2024). If you are a practitioner, your years of experience, relevant education, and innate sagacity definitely set you apart from your less knowledgeable coworkers – regardless of what your boss says. If you are an academic, your impressive publication record, your unique and effective teaching style, and your wisdom speak for themselves – no matter what the Dean indicates in your performance appraisal reports and what the reviewers say about your papers. If you are a student – not a problem – you are unquestionably far ahead of your peers, as many of them will never even graduate!

The aggregate results based on the data submitted by all readers would present a picture that defies basic statistical assumptions because the bell-shaped curve would range from "about the average" to "the top 10%," with the mean at around "the top 30%," and only a few placing themselves on the left-hand side of the scale. Surprisingly, almost everyone's knowledge would appear to exceed the average knowledge of his/her peers. This study refers to the phenomenon above as *knowledge self-enhancement*, defined as an employee's unrealistic, deeply etched, and persistent belief that the job-related knowledge he/she possesses exceeds that held by his/her coworkers. It is a form of self-deception and self-illusion (Dunning *et al.*, 2004; Dunning, 2022) wherein someone amplifies his/her declarative, procedural, causal, and relational workplace knowledge (Zack, 1999; Zack, 2001) and believes in his/her knowledge superiority.

Next, let me ask you the following question: "Do you routinely emphasize and communicate your (alleged) high level of professional knowledge to your coworkers?" Here, the responses will be mixed, but a sizable group of readers will certainly score close to "always." If so, they engage in *knowledge self-presentation*, which refers to the systematic communication and demonstration of the fact that one is a highly knowledgeable employee. Knowledge self-presentation is a behavioral manifestation of the self-distorted belief about one's knowledge superiority (i.e. knowledge self-enhancement), aimed at appearing extremely competent in the eyes of coworkers. The phenomenon of knowledge self-presentation is supported by a comprehensive line of research on impression management, which posits that most people engage in managing their self-image to be perceived positively by others (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996; Bolino *et al.*, 2008; Bolino *et al.*, 2016; Hollenbaugh, 2021). Knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation in the workplace are two conceptually distinct constructs that correspond to cognitive and behavioral components, respectively. While these components are conceptually independent, knowledge self-enhancement is a necessary condition for knowledge self-presentation: an employee must believe in his/her knowledge superiority to behave in a corresponding manner. Consistent with prior theorizations of related constructs (Paulhus and John, 1998; Robins and Beer, 2001; de Vries *et al.*, 2014), both knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation are conceptualized as traits rather than states. While they can vary depending on environmental settings and situational demands (Vecchione and Alessandri, 2013), eventually, they return to a stable level (Steyer *et al.*, 1999). For example, someone who considers him/herself one of the most knowledgeable employees and behaves accordingly may change his/her mind and behavior when moving to another organization, and so reduce the magnitude of knowledge self-enhancement and

knowledge self-presentation. Over time, however, he/she is likely to regain the overall tendency to engage in knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation.

While knowledge management researchers have made numerous breakthroughs in exploring various antecedents of productive and counterproductive knowledge behavior (e.g. see Oliveira *et al.*, 2021; Anand *et al.*, 2022; Yeboah, 2023; Cen *et al.*, 2024; Tan *et al.*, 2024; Thomas, 2025), they have largely overlooked the role of self-enhancement and self-presentation in the knowledge management context and their behavioral effects that lead to biased actions. One of the limitations of knowledge management research is that it relies on a rational model of human behavior, despite the fact that many human actions are influenced by unconscious processes that operate outside of individuals' awareness (Bargh, 1994; Stajkovic *et al.*, 2006; Latham *et al.*, 2010; Bargh *et al.*, 2012; Serenko and Turel, 2020; Palmucci *et al.*, 2025). As a result, knowledge management scholars tend to focus on structural, relational, or motivational drivers of knowledge behavior while underestimating the role of deeper underlying cognitive mechanisms that operate at a more implicit level. This omission is regrettable, as research in psychology indicates that self-enhancement and self-presentation shape people's cognition, emotions, interpersonal dynamics, and actions (Dunning *et al.*, 2004; Zell *et al.*, 2020; Dunning, 2022). By introducing relevant theory from psychology into the knowledge management domain, this study addresses a significant theoretical blind spot and provides actionable insights for research and practice.

This article comprises two studies. The purpose of Study 1 is to develop and validate a survey-based research instrument to measure knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation in the workplace. While the related concepts have been previously documented in various domains (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996; Alicke and Govorun, 2005; Bolino *et al.*, 2008; Bolino *et al.*, 2016; Sedikides and Alicke, 2019; Zell *et al.*, 2020; Alicke *et al.*, 2024), the knowledge management literature has hitherto remained silent about this intriguing phenomenon. As Study 1 demonstrates, it is possible to measure both constructs and, as expected, a vast majority of employees routinely self-enhance their professional knowledge and some also deliberately emphasize their knowledge superiority when interacting with their coworkers by engaging in knowledge self-presentation.

A critical scholar or a knowledge manager (e.g. Chief Knowledge Officer, Chief Human Capital Officer, Chief Human Resources Officer, or Chief People Officer) may pose a logical "so what?" question: "What is the impact of knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation from the knowledge management perspective?" Study 2 answers this question by positioning these constructs within a nomological network that includes other well-established knowledge management constructs – knowledge hoarding (Evans *et al.*, 2015; Oliveira *et al.*, 2021; de Garcia *et al.*, 2022), knowledge sharing (Ford and Staples, 2010), knowledge sabotage (Serenko, 2019; Perotti *et al.*, 2023; Perotti *et al.*, 2024), and knowledge hiding (Connelly *et al.*, 2012; Anand *et al.*, 2022) – as well as the narcissistic personality trait (Back *et al.*, 2013; Miller *et al.*, 2021). The findings reveal an interesting nomological network that shows that knowledge self-enhancement is a neutral or even positive construct, as it promotes both knowledge hoarding and knowledge sharing. By contrast, knowledge self-presentation represents a negative construct, as it gives rise to knowledge hiding and knowledge sabotage. Moreover, the influence of knowledge self-enhancement on knowledge self-presentation is strengthened by the narcissistic personality trait.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 defines and describes the focal constructs. Sections 3 and 4 present the results of Study 1 and Study 2, respectively. Section 5 offers the theoretical, practical, and policy implications of this study. Section 6 outlines this study's limitations, proposes future research directions, and concludes the study.

2. What are knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation?

2.1 Knowledge self-enhancement in the workplace

In most aspects of life, people tend to naturally enhance their sense of personal worth and create overly positive self-views by amplifying and even aggrandizing their qualities and abilities compared to their peers (Alicke *et al.*, 1995; Sedikides and Alicke, 2019). This phenomenon is mentioned under various labels – illusory superiority, overconfidence effect, and superiority bias – but it is best known as the above-average or better-than-average effect (Alicke and Govorun, 2005), because when most people inflate their characteristics and abilities, almost everyone seems to be above average, which defies statistical possibility. This effect was documented more than half a century ago when Codol (1975) experimentally discovered that individuals consistently overstate their positive qualities compared to others, and Cross (1977) reported that more than 90% of college faculty members rate themselves as above-average instructors. Since then, people's penchant for self-enhancement has been confirmed in various contexts, for instance, in terms of driving ability (Harré and Sibley, 2007), morality (Vecchione *et al.*, 2013), and academic achievement (Aelenei *et al.*, 2023). In addition, a similar proclivity has been observed in the self-assessment of skill and expertise in other areas (Dunning *et al.*, 2004; Sanchez and Dunning, 2023).

The reader may ask another reasonable question: "Why do employees tend to consistently enhance their knowledge?" Indeed, on the surface, it seems strange that workers engage in self-deception instead of developing a realistic picture of their actual knowledge. The literature posits that knowledge self-enhancement arises from two psychological mechanisms: information deficits and information neglect (Dunning *et al.*, 2004; Dunning, 2022). Information deficits result from workers' lack of expertise to accurately assess their level of knowledge, because it is almost impossible for an ordinary employee to realize how much knowledge he/she is missing. In a fast-paced professional environment, it is very difficult to find the time and cognitive resources to accurately distinguish between good and poor decisions, to unbiasedly analyze performance outcomes, to become aware of alternative decisions, and to fully learn from mistakes. The concept of "professional knowledge" is also very abstract and difficult to define, which makes social comparisons very challenging.

Information neglect is the product of workers' tendency to focus on their own qualities rather than on those of their coworkers. Owing to people's egocentric nature (Frankenberger, 2000), when assessing their level of knowledge relative to that of their peers, employees spend most of their time evaluating their own characteristics while almost ignoring those of others. For example, a business analyst may consider him/herself to be above-average knowledgeable because of holding a Bachelor of Commerce degree, while overlooking the fact that most of his/her colleagues have the same, or even higher, levels of education and thus may be at least as knowledgeable. In addition, most professional knowledge exists in a tacit form and is difficult to observe by outsiders (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). As a result, an employee may be able to estimate the amount of his/her tacit knowledge but may be completely oblivious to his/her coworkers' tacit knowledge and, consequently, discard the very possibility of its existence.

Another fair question is whether knowledge self-enhancement is beneficial or detrimental to employees, organizations, and other stakeholders. On the one hand, it may be argued that knowledge self-enhancement has several benefits (Alicke *et al.*, 1995; Dufner *et al.*, 2019; Sedikides and Alicke, 2019; Zell *et al.*, 2020). First, according to Taylor and Brown's (1988) social psychological perspective on mental health, unrealistically positive illusions arising from knowledge self-enhancement can contribute to workers' mental health. Knowledge self-enhancement allows employees to develop high self-esteem and self-confidence in their workplace, to create a perception that they are in control of their professional lives, and

to believe that they will be very successful in their future careers. This leads to lower stress, improved mood, optimism, and overall happiness, which are key attributes of a mentally healthy worker. Thinking about one's own professional credentials in a positive light, warranted or not, is somewhat like communicating with a therapist or a counselor, allowing employees to express their thoughts (even to themselves), reduce anxiety, moderate negative feelings, and, as a result, feel better at work. Second, knowledge self-enhancement helps employees boost their productivity (O'Mara and Gaertner, 2017). It creates a self-fulfilling prophecy: by considering themselves very knowledgeable, employees try harder when working on difficult tasks, embark on challenging assignments without procrastination, and are more persistent because they are confident they have the necessary knowledge to achieve their goals. Finally, through knowledge self-enhancement, employees develop stronger knowledge self-efficacy – i.e. confidence in their ability to offer valuable knowledge that is useful to their organization (Kankanhalli *et al.*, 2005). As a result, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors, including knowledge sharing (Matsuo, 2024), which may be intrinsically rewarding for some employees. In addition, they may appear to be more knowledgeable to others, including supervisors, and thus receive formal recognition, including promotions.

At the same time, knowledge self-enhancement can have three major negative effects. First, it motivates employees to seek positive feedback and, often, disregard negative feedback from their supervisors (Szumowska *et al.*, 2023), with the effect that their supervisors may stop providing constructive criticism, which eventually makes self-enhancers less productive. Second, knowledge self-enhancers may embark on tasks for which they are not qualified and so fail to deliver the promised results. Such knowledge self-enhancers often exhibit self-serving bias (Sedikides and Alicke, 2019; Hyun *et al.*, 2022) – a tendency to credit themselves for success and attribute failure to external factors (Kelly, 1972; Weiner *et al.*, 1972) – and, consequently, they may not be able to learn from their mistakes, which limits these employees' ability to improve. As a result, they may eventually be passed over for promotions and even terminated (Colvin and Griffo, 2008). Finally, knowledge self-enhancement, which is a cognitive construct, may lead to workplace behavior in which employees systematically demonstrate their overstated knowledge to their coworkers. This behavior is referred to as knowledge self-presentation and is discussed in detail in the following section.

2.2 Knowledge self-presentation in the workplace

In contrast to knowledge self-enhancement, which reflects how employees view themselves (i.e. their cognition), knowledge self-presentation pertains to how employees act when interacting with their coworkers (i.e. their behavior). It is founded on a widely accepted premise that virtually all individuals care about and try to control how they are seen by others (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996; Hollenbaugh, 2021). Since early childhood, individuals are routinely taught that it is critical to consider the impression they make on other people and how to proactively manage the impressions others form of them (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). As such, most people want to make a good impression on their friends, classmates, neighbors, acquaintances, and even those they hardly know. Humans are the most gregarious species on the planet; they are genetically predisposed to deriving pleasure from socialization, communication, and acceptance by others. Many transfer these same predispositions to the workplace and believe that, to become respected members of their professional community, they need to position themselves in a positive light by publicly overstating their professional knowledge. Thus, people try to positively control their impressions in the workplace environment at all stages, including job interviews, routine performance, and career advancements – and doing so may have important implications for both individuals and their organizations (Bolino and Turnley, 1999; Bolino *et al.*, 2008; Bolino *et al.*, 2016; Debus *et al.*, 2024). While there is nothing wrong with trying to make a

good impression on fellow coworkers, issues arise when employees engage in deceptive tactics by overstating their credentials (Chawla *et al.*, 2021), particularly their workplace knowledge as a form of self-promotion (Jones and Pittman, 1982). This study refers to this phenomenon as knowledge self-presentation and hypothesizes that it is driven by knowledge self-enhancement.

On the one hand, knowledge self-presentation may produce positive consequences for the employee who engages in this practice. When someone behaves as if he/she is highly knowledgeable by overstating his/her skills, expertise, credentials, and so on, coworkers and even supervisors may initially and erroneously assume that such behavior is fully warranted and treat the knowledge self-presenter accordingly. As a result, a knowledge self-presenter may reap benefits in the form of (undeserved) praise, promotions, positive performance evaluations, respect, and self-gratification. On the other hand, such "success" is usually short-lived because others eventually discover the actual level of this worker's knowledge and reflect this during their interactions with the culprit. Knowledge self-presentation may also create the phenomenon referred to as the "promoter's paradox": the harder the knowledge self-presenter tries to impress his/her coworkers with his/her high level of knowledge, the easier it becomes for the observers to realize that it is a mere exaggeration and to discount these unsubstantiated knowledge claims (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Bolino *et al.*, 2016).

3. Study 1

3.1 Objective

To the best of the author's knowledge, no study has specifically explored the concepts above in the context of knowledge behavior. Nevertheless, preliminary evidence points to the potential existence of knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation phenomena, which warrant further empirical examination. Serenko and Bontis (2016) show that individual employees underestimate their knowledge hiding behavior or overestimate that of their coworkers; the mean difference between self-reported coworkers' and personal knowledge hiding is 0.64, measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ($p < 0.001$). Serenko and Choo (2020) and Serenko and Abubakar (2023) reach a similar conclusion with respect to knowledge sabotage and report mean differences between self-reported perceived coworkers' and personal knowledge sabotage of 0.68 and 0.50, respectively, measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ($p < 0.05$). Their findings confirm that employees believe in their own superiority over coworkers in the context of knowledge behavior. An extensive line of research developed by Paulhus and colleagues (Paulhus *et al.*, 2003; Paulhus and Harms, 2004; Jin *et al.*, 2023) demonstrates that individuals routinely overclaim the degree of their knowledge by reporting familiarity with nonexistent things, persons, events, concepts, and so on – even after being warned that such items may not exist (Atir *et al.*, 2015). This shows that people report possessing knowledge that is simply impossible to have and indicates that individuals tend to self-enhance their knowledge.

To demonstrate the existence of knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation, Study 1 proposes a survey instrument to measure these constructs and evaluates its psychometric properties.

3.2 The instrument

3.2.1 The knowledge self-enhancement scale. To develop a scale for knowledge self-enhancement, the taxonomy of knowledge types by Zack (1999, 2001) was employed to create a list of items pertaining to knowledge self-enhancement. This taxonomy distinguishes among four knowledge types that were used to operationalize the construct: declarative knowledge (*know-about*: knowledge of the various facets of an organization),

procedural knowledge (*know-how*: knowledge of the appropriate sequence of events and tools to achieve desirable organizational outcomes), causal knowledge (*know-why*: knowledge of the factors driving desirable organizational outcomes), and relational knowledge (*know-with*: knowledge of the relationships and interactions among individuals and functions within an organization). Thus, knowledge self-enhancement was operationalized as a four-dimensional second-order construct. This typology is relevant because, instead of providing a higher-level collective view of organizational human capital, it offers useful conceptual distinctions of knowledge types that may be fruitfully applied at the individual level of analysis (Joe *et al.*, 2013; Lambe, 2023). Four questions were developed for each knowledge type (i.e. 16 questions in total).

3.2.2 The knowledge self-presentation scale. To operationalize the knowledge self-presentation construct, the list of 13 relevant instruments summarized by Bolino *et al.* (2016, pp. 394–396) was consulted, with special attention paid to the works by Bolino and Turnley (1999) and Kumar and Beyerlein (1991). The relevant items were adapted and modified to fit the construct's conceptual definition, and new items were proposed.

An extensive face validity assessment of the entire instrument was conducted by consulting a group of researchers and practitioners, and their feedback was implemented one expert at a time. All constructs were measured on a nine-point Likert-type scale. The rationale is that, when measuring concepts that are prone to exaggeration, individuals are very unlikely to select responses at the lower end of the scale and, to maintain an acceptable level of item variance, it is vital to increase the number of available response options. Jumping ahead, only a few participants selected the two lowest response options, which suggests that the proposed scale format operated as a seven-point scale from the variance perspective. A marker variable ("In terms of my future travel plans, I will go on a trip in the next six months") was added to estimate common method variance (CMV) (Zaza *et al.*, 2022). The survey also included attention check questions. The final scales are presented in Appendix 1.

3.3 Discriminant validity and related concepts

The discriminant validity of the knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation constructs was demonstrated against three constructs that tap into similar cognitive and behavioral domains: socially desirable responding (or social desirability bias), lying, and overclaiming.

Socially desirable responding refers to a situation in which survey respondents over-report positive behaviors, abilities, traits, etc. and under-report negative ones (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960; Tan *et al.*, 2021). This self-favoring manner of responding to questionnaire items comprises two dimensions: self-deceptive enhancement (i.e. a conscious, deliberate tendency to provide inflated self-descriptions) and impression management (i.e. an unconscious, automatic tendency to provide honest yet positively biased self-descriptions) (Hart *et al.*, 2015). While some of the assumptions underlying knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation share commonalities with the socially desirable dimensions above, these constructs are believed to be conceptually different. Therefore, the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form by Hart *et al.* (2015) was included in the survey.

It is also critical to differentiate between the proposed constructs and outright lying, i.e. when respondents deliberately falsify their answers. To identify whether survey participants deliberately provide false or misleading statements, the Lie Scale from the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck *et al.*, 1985) was included.

Overclaiming is a person's tendency to report knowledge of nonexistent items, including events, persons, objects, concepts, facts, etc. (Paulhus *et al.*, 2003; Paulhus and Harms, 2004; Jin *et al.*, 2023). It differs from socially desirable responding and lying because

respondents overclaim their knowledge while truly believing that they are very knowledgeable individuals. The overclaiming instrument was adapted from Paulhus *et al.* (2003) and Paulhus and Harms (2004). A short version of the instrument was obtained from one of the developers of the original scale. Because the original instrument was created more than 20 years ago, a comprehensive check of the items was conducted and three foils (i.e. nonexistent items) were found to be ambiguous. These were replaced with foils in the same categories from the long version. For example, "Jackson Howell," which was used as a foil in the earlier version, is now a well-known hockey player, and this foil was replaced. Ten hits (non-foils) were found to be obsolete and were removed (i.e. the instrument was shortened from 60 to 50 items by removing the 10 obsolete items). The final version contained 40 hits (i.e. items that exist) and 10 foils (i.e. items that do not exist), with a foil-to-hit ratio of 25%. The questionnaire also included basic demographic data (see Appendix 1).

3.4 Data collection

The *G*Power 3* statistical power analysis software package (Faul *et al.*, 2007) was used to calculate the required sample size *a priori*, as recommended by Aguirre-Urreta *et al.* (2024). The minimum required sample size was 189. To exceed this minimum, 218 full-time employees who had worked at their current organization for at least two years were recruited from CloudResearch Connect – a crowdsourcing platform for online research (https://connect.cloudresearch.com) (Hartman *et al.*, 2023). A reward of US$2.00 was offered for the full and accurate completion of the questionnaire. Each organization needed to have at least 10 employees. The use of such platforms, including CloudResearch, is well-established in knowledge management research (Peralta and Saldanha, 2014; Andreeva and Zappa, 2023; Duan *et al.*, 2023; Mahapatra and Ford, 2024; Serenko, 2025a; Zweig *et al.*, 2025). As Douglas *et al.* (2023) report, CloudResearch participants provide high-quality data that exceeds that obtained from Amazon's MTurk, Qualtrics, and SONA. Aguinis *et al.*'s (2021) methodological recommendations were implemented to further improve data quality. Sixteen submissions that failed attention checks were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 202 valid responses, i.e. a 7% rejection rate, which compares favorably with the general survey rejection rate of 8%–12% (Curran, 2016). The study was reviewed by and received clearance from the Research Ethics Board of the author's university.

3.5 Statistical analysis

Scores for declarative, procedural, causal, and relational knowledge self-enhancement, as well as for knowledge self-presentation, were obtained by calculating these constructs' factor scores. The second-order knowledge self-enhancement construct was created by obtaining factor scores from its four first-order dimensions (i.e. the first-order factor scores from the four constructs were used to create the second-order factor scores). Both socially desirable responding constructs – self-deceptive enhancement and impression management – were created using the continuous scoring procedure outlined and recommended by Stöber *et al.* (2002), and their factor scores were calculated and used for analysis. The lying construct was created by following the manual in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck *et al.*, 1985) and converting responses according to the instructions, as stated in Appendix 1. The overclaiming score was computed using the responses to all foils (i.e. on all nonexistent items) and converting them to factor scores. Note that higher scores on the constructs above indicate higher levels of knowledge self-enhancement, knowledge self-presentation, self-deceptive enhancement, impression management, lying, and knowledge overclaiming. A correlation matrix was then constructed.

3.6 Results

Appendix 2 shows that respondents had substantial work experience in both public and private organizations of various sizes. The sample was diverse: overall work experience ranged from 2 to 45 years; work experience in the current organization ranged from 2 to 32 years; the average age was 35 (ranging from 18 to 68); and there was some variation in the highest level of education. A good gender balance was achieved. Thus, it was concluded that this sample fairly represents the general population of employees in the USA.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and construct reliability assessment. First, the knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation constructs exhibited excellent psychometric properties because all corrected item-to-total correlations, Cronbach's alpha values, and item loadings exceeded the generally accepted cutoff points of 0.35, 0.7, and 0.7, respectively (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Second, both socially desirable responding dimensions – self-deceptive enhancement and impression management – also showed strong psychometric properties. Third, one item of the lying construct (LIE1) had a poor loading and a low corrected item-to-total correlation and was dropped. All other lying items met the minimum reliability requirements for a dichotomous scale and were therefore retained. Finally, the overclaiming construct fully passed all reliability thresholds.

Figures 2–5 show that employees self-enhance their knowledge by approximately 20% and, as a result, a vast majority of them rate themselves above the average. While many rate themselves in the top 10% and 20%, almost no one selected the same option at the corresponding bottom end of the scale.

Table 2 presents construct correlations. CMV was ruled out for several reasons. First, the marker variable did not correlate with the focal constructs at $p < 0.01$. Second, the results of Harman's (1967) single-factor test, performed on the indicators of three constructs – knowledge self-enhancement, knowledge self-presentation, and socially desirable responding (both self-deceptive enhancement and impression management) – revealed that the first factors accounted for only 24.9% of the total variance. Third, most correlations between the newly introduced constructs (i.e. knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation) and the other constructs were either non-significant or very low, which supports their discriminant validity and further minimizes the likelihood of CMV.

3.7 Discussion

The results reveal that knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation are distinct constructs and differ from other well-established measures that tap into the domain of exaggerating one's characteristics and abilities. The weak, yet statistically significant, positive correlation between knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$) is theoretically expected.

These constructs are distinct from lying. Employees truly believe in their knowledge superiority and honestly demonstrate their high level of knowledge to their coworkers. The fact that knowledge self-enhancement is not correlated with overclaiming – i.e. a tendency to report the possession of nonexistent knowledge – further confirms that employees are prone to exaggerate their professional knowledge, yet they do not deliberately falsify their inflated knowledge claims. Knowledge self-enhancement is weakly positively correlated with two dimensions of socially desirable responding: self-deceptive enhancement and impression management. Most likely, both constructs are driven by similar underlying factors, including personality traits.

Table 1 Study 1 – descriptive statistics and construct reliability assessment

Item	Mean	SD	ITC	Loading	Alpha
DKSE1	6.77	1.41	0.84	0.927	0.85
DKSE2	6.68	1.58	0.70	0.848	
DKSE3	6.40	1.56	0.65	0.814	
DKSE4	7.37	1.54	0.54	0.721	
PKSE1	6.92	1.42	0.72	0.861	0.85
PKSE2	6.72	1.87	0.56	0.732	
PKSE3	7.02	1.52	0.78	0.889	
PKSE4	6.70	1.57	0.66	0.826	
CKSE1	6.47	1.55	0.73	0.856	0.86
CKSE2	6.55	1.46	0.79	0.891	
CKSE3	6.38	1.59	0.71	0.849	
CKSE4	7.31	1.52	0.61	0.769	
RKSE1	6.24	1.58	0.81	0.904	0.90
RKSE2	6.23	1.63	0.83	0.916	
RKSE3	6.21	1.59	0.81	0.898	
RKSE4	6.25	1.60	0.65	0.784	
KSPR1	5.14	2.24	0.87	0.904	0.95
KSPR2	5.24	2.31	0.86	0.900	
KSPR3	5.78	2.18	0.72	0.787	
KSPR4	4.55	2.37	0.87	0.905	
KSPR5	4.81	2.33	0.90	0.931	
KSPR6	4.80	2.38	0.83	0.870	
KSPR7	4.05	2.32	0.70	0.760	
KSPR8	4.33	2.40	0.84	0.877	
BSE1	5.89	2.38	0.50	0.635	0.76
BSE2	6.24	1.94	0.44	0.623	
BSE3	5.52	2.38	0.52	0.669	
BSE4	3.69	2.10	0.36	0.513	
BSE5	5.21	2.21	0.48	0.620	
BSE6	6.41	1.91	0.35	0.535	
BSE7	6.82	1.46	0.57	0.726	
BSE8	5.42	2.45	0.41	0.562	
BIM1	5.19	2.37	0.60	0.730	0.82
BIM2	4.70	2.36	0.56	0.687	
BIM3	5.29	2.30	0.62	0.739	
BIM4	6.09	2.36	0.57	0.703	
BIM5	5.27	2.38	0.53	0.660	
BIM6	5.14	2.44	0.56	0.675	
BIM7	6.96	2.20	0.35	0.457	
BIM8	5.76	2.40	0.58	0.690	
LIE1*	0.68	0.47	0.12	0.140	0.84
LIE2	0.38	0.49	0.61	0.711	
LIE3	0.59	0.49	0.54	0.645	
LIE4	0.22	0.42	0.42	0.504	
LIE5	0.41	0.49	0.60	0.699	
LIE6	0.36	0.48	0.39	0.486	
LIE7	0.21	0.41	0.57	0.697	
LIE8	0.30	0.46	0.53	0.639	
LIE9	0.33	0.47	0.52	0.641	
LIE10	0.48	0.50	0.65	0.737	
LIE11	0.41	0.49	0.49	0.562	
LIE12	0.22	0.41	0.53	0.645	
El Puente	1.66	1.34	0.61	0.691	0.92
Pullman paintings	1.77	1.32	0.69	0.766	
Sentence stigma	2.26	1.72	0.72	0.767	
Plates of parallax	1.85	1.53	0.75	0.814	
Doctor Fehr	1.53	1.18	0.73	0.806	
Megaphrenia	1.40	1.05	0.74	0.805	

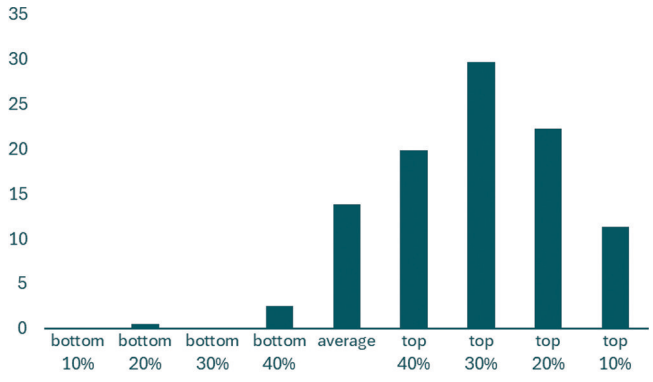
(*continued*)

Table 1

Item	Mean	SD	ITC	Loading	Alpha
Shunt-word	1.89	1.59	0.75	0.802	
Cholerine	1.82	1.60	0.64	0.710	
Bulldog Graziano	1.68	1.37	0.72	0.781	
Consumer apparatus	2.69	1.93	0.68	0.734	

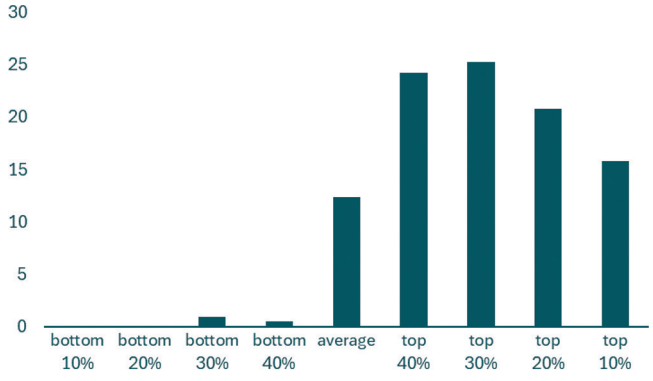
Note(s): *dropped item; SD – standard deviation; ITC – corrected item-to-total correlation; Alpha – Cronbach's alpha; DKSE – declarative knowledge self-enhancement; PKSE – procedural knowledge self-enhancement; CKSE – causal knowledge self-enhancement; RKSE – relational knowledge self-enhancement; KSPR – knowledge self-presentation; BSE – socially desirable responding – self-deceptive enhancement; BIM – socially desirable responding – impression management; LIE – lying
Source(s): Author's own work

Figure 2 Declarative knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 1



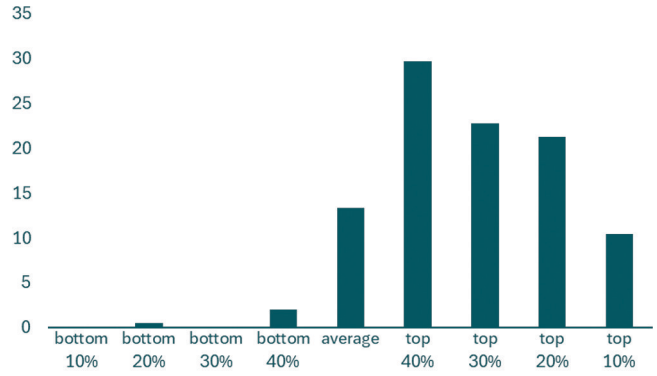
Source: Author's own work

Figure 3 Procedural knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 1



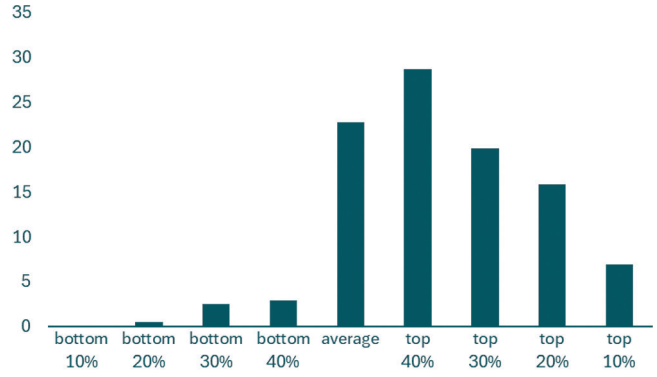
Source: Author's own work

Figure 4 Causal knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 1



Source: Author's own work

Figure 5 Relational knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 1



Source: Author's own work

The positive correlation between knowledge self-presentation and overclaiming ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$) is particularly intriguing: it shows that knowledge self-presenters may demonstrate not only valid but also false knowledge to their coworkers. This finding aligns with the concept of knowledge sabotage (Serenko, 2019; Serenko, 2020), according to which knowledge saboteurs may provide wrong knowledge to their victims. Knowledge self-enhancement is also positively correlated with overall work experience, age, and education. This appears to be a natural phenomenon: as people gain work experience, age, and become more educated, they tend to grow overconfident in their professional knowledge, which is not necessarily a valid self-assessment.

While there was general consistency among the four components of knowledge self-enhancement (declarative, procedural, causal, and relational), some differences in their correlations with the other factors were observed. Thus, whereas they reflect the same phenomenon, they tap into slightly different underlying dimensions, which further supports the positioning of knowledge self-enhancement as a second-order construct.

Table 2 Study 1 – construct correlations

	KSPR	BSE	BIM	LIE	OVCL	WRKO	WRKT	AGE	EDUC	NEMP
KSE	0.17*	0.23**	0.19**	0.09	0.05	0.13	0.17*	0.13*	0.17**	0.08
DKSE	0.15*	0.19**	0.14	0.06	0.02	0.14*	0.18**	0.16*	0.17*	0.09
PKSE	0.10	0.20*	0.18**	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.18*	0.13	0.12	0.08
CKSE	0.15*	0.21**	0.21**	0.11	0.06	0.13	0.15*	0.11	0.14	0.06
RKSE	0.22**	0.25**	0.18**	0.13	0.08	0.13	0.10	0.09	0.21**	0.05
KSPR	NA	0.11	−0.13	0.06	0.39**	−0.05	−0.12	−0.07	0.17*	−0.04

Note(s): KSE – knowledge self-enhancement – second order; DKSE – declarative knowledge self-enhancement; PKSE – procedural knowledge self-enhancement; CKSE – causal knowledge self-enhancement; RKSE – relational knowledge self-enhancement; KSPR – knowledge self-presentation; BSE – socially desirable responding – self-deceptive enhancement; BIM – socially desirable responding – impression management; LIE – lying; OVCL – overclaiming; WRKO – years of work experience at the current organization; WRKT – total years of work experience; AGE – age; EDUC – highest level of education; NEMP – number of employees in the current organization; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$
Source(s): Author's own work

4. Study 2

4.1 Objective

In addition to establishing a valid measure of the constructs of interest, it is critical to demonstrate their role within the nomological network of knowledge behavior. Thus, Study 2 theorizes and empirically tests the relationship between knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation as well as the behavioral outcomes of these constructs.

Knowledge self-enhancement refers to the cognitive processes that create a particular state of mind. Knowledge self-presentation represents one's behavior, which is driven by cognition: in order for an employee to demonstrate his/her exaggerated knowledge to others, one must believe that he/she possesses such knowledge. A positive correlation observed between knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation in Study 1 ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that these constructs are positively associated. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Knowledge self-enhancement has a positive direct effect on knowledge self-presentation.

Although the correlation between knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation observed in Study 1 is positive, its low magnitude suggests that other factors may potentially moderate this relationship. A strong body of knowledge in psychology (Allport, 1937; Cattell, 1946; Matthews *et al.*, 2003) and knowledge management (Banagou *et al.*, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2023; Scuotto *et al.*, 2024; Tan *et al.*, 2024; Serenko, 2025b) shows that employee behavior is frequently driven by personality traits. Narcissism, in particular, plays a crucial role in the self-enhancement and self-presentation context (Grijalva and Zhang, 2016; Hart *et al.*, 2017). Narcissism is a two-dimensional concept comprising:

1. narcissistic admiration (striving for uniqueness, grandiose fantasies, and charm); and
2. narcissistic rivalry (striving for supremacy, devaluation of others, and aggressiveness), with the overarching goal of maintaining a grandiose self (Back *et al.*, 2013).

Narcissists' actions are driven by a dominant status drive, which overshadows other behavioral motives (Grapsas *et al.*, 2020). The contemporary workplace requires employees to frequently communicate and collaborate, both in person and virtually. According to trait activation theory, such interactions present many trait-relevant cues that

automatically activate an employee's narcissistic personality trait, assuming the employee possesses it (Tett and Guterman, 2000; Tett *et al.*, 2021). If an employee believes in his/her knowledge superiority over coworkers (i.e. engages in knowledge self-enhancement), his/her narcissistic trait produces an urge to publicly demonstrate this advantage to boost self-esteem and satisfy ego (Grijalva and Zhang, 2016). This public demonstration of exaggerated knowledge allows a narcissist to both achieve admiration and belittle those who are presumably less knowledgeable. Consistent with the tenets of the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, 1976, 1980), which argues that personality traits may be positioned as moderators, it is proposed that the narcissistic personality trait acts as a self-regulatory mechanism that amplifies the effect of knowledge self-enhancement on knowledge self-presentation. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. The narcissistic personality trait positively moderates (amplifies) the positive effect of knowledge self-enhancement on knowledge self-presentation.

In addition to establishing a causal relationship between knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation, moderated by narcissism, it is important to understand the consequences of these novel constructs in the context of knowledge behavior. This study hypothesizes that knowledge self-enhancement facilitates knowledge hoarding, which refers to the continuous strategic acquisition, retention, and stockpiling of professional knowledge in case one might need it in the future (Evans *et al.*, 2015; Oliveira *et al.*, 2021). It is proposed that knowledge self-enhancement contributes to the strategic accumulation of professional knowledge regardless of its immediate relevance: employees who believe that they are more knowledgeable than their coworkers feel compelled to continuously amass knowledge to sustain and improve their advantage. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Knowledge self-enhancement has a positive direct effect on knowledge hoarding.

Knowledge self-enhancement also contributes to productive knowledge behavior by facilitating knowledge sharing, which refers to providing one's knowledge to coworkers when needed (Ford and Staples, 2010). This happens because, even if knowledge self-enhancers do not explicitly exaggerate their knowledge in front of others (i.e. do not engage in knowledge self-presentation), their overstated knowledge beliefs may be evident in their routine behavior, attitude, and demeanor. As a result, others may frequently approach them with knowledge requests, which knowledge self-enhancers are likely to accommodate to maintain their perceived status as highly knowledgeable employees. They do not regret transferring their cherished knowledge to others because, based on their self-assessment, they possess more knowledge than their coworkers anyway. Knowledge sharing also contributes to their knowledge self-efficacy and creates a positive feeling of knowledge superiority. It is, therefore, hypothesized as follows:

H4. Knowledge self-enhancement has a positive direct effect on knowledge sharing.

While knowledge self-enhancement is expected to lead to both neutral (knowledge hoarding) and productive (knowledge sharing) behavior, knowledge self-presentation is assumed to cause counterproductive knowledge behavior. The key assumption is that employees who publicly display their exaggerated knowledge tend to rely on unethical practices to assert their knowledge superiority over others. For example, previous research demonstrates that self-presenters engage in outright deception by inventing facts, creating fictional stories, embellishing themselves, overstating abilities, omitting weaknesses, and modifying statements to match others' expectations (Levashina and Campion, 2007). They may even commit to various intimidation tactics – including threatening, yelling, embarrassing, and insulting – to convey and defend a desired impression on coworkers and subordinates (Bolino and Turnley, 1999; Asawo and George, 2018).

Knowledge self-presenters perceive others as their rivals who may overshadow them and steal their spotlight. Therefore, they may use counterproductive knowledge behavior as a tactic to diminish others and maintain their self-invented image as the most knowledgeable employee. Knowledge sabotage and knowledge hiding represent the highly pernicious forms of counterproductive knowledge behavior. It is hypothesized that employees who pursue knowledge self-presentation engage in knowledge sabotage and knowledge hiding. In particular, knowledge self-presentation is proposed to impact all four knowledge hiding strategies – evasive (when knowledge hiders dodge, stall, or ignore the request), playing dumb (when knowledge hiders pretend not to possess the requested knowledge), rationalized (when knowledge hiders justify why they cannot share the requested knowledge), and bullying (when knowledge hiders attack the knowledge requester) (Connelly *et al.*, 2012; Yuan *et al.*, 2021) – as well as general knowledge hiding. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5. Knowledge self-presentation has a positive direct effect on knowledge sabotage.

H6. Knowledge self-presentation has a positive direct effect on evasive knowledge hiding.

H7. Knowledge self-presentation has a positive direct effect on playing dumb knowledge hiding.

H8. Knowledge self-presentation has a positive direct effect on rationalized knowledge hiding.

H9. Knowledge self-presentation has a positive direct effect on bullying knowledge hiding.

H10. Knowledge self-presentation has a positive direct effect on general knowledge hiding.

Figure 6 presents the proposed model.

4.2 The instrument

The scales for knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation developed in Study 1 were applied without modifications. The following previously established scales were used: knowledge hoarding and knowledge sharing by Connelly *et al.* (2012); knowledge sabotage by Serenko and Choo (2020); evasive knowledge hiding, playing dumb knowledge hiding, and rationalized knowledge hiding by Connelly *et al.* (2012); bullying knowledge hiding by Yuan *et al.* (2021); and general knowledge hiding by Peng (2013) (with modifications). The above scales are presented in detail and validated by Serenko (2023, pp. 2280–2281). The narcissistic personality trait was measured with a two-dimensional scale developed by Back *et al.* (2013). Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they interact with their coworkers in person and virtually. The same instructions and survey qualification criteria as in Study 1 were applied.

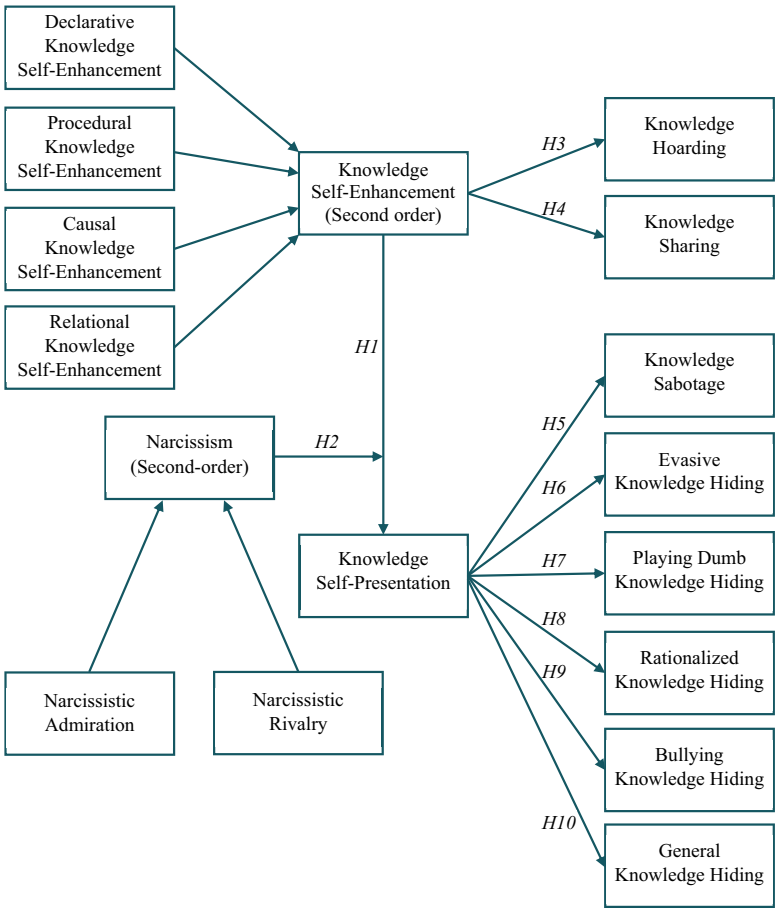
4.3 Data collection

*G*Power 3* statistical power analysis (Faul *et al.*, 2007) was employed to calculate the required sample size. The minimum sample size was 169. CloudResearch Connect was used to recruit 181 survey participants for a compensation of US$2.20. Out of 181 received surveys, 10 failed attention checks and were excluded, resulting in a valid sample of 171 responses (i.e. a 5.5% rejection rate).

4.4 Statistical analysis

The measurement and structural models were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with *SmartPLS 4* (Ringle *et al.*, 2022), which is

Figure 6 The proposed model



Source: Author's own work

suitable for this context (Cepeda-Carrion *et al.*, 2019). Knowledge management constructs, including knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation proposed in this study, are considered design constructs, operationalized with indicator data and are best modeled as composites, which is handled well by PLS (Henseler, 2017). Mode A (composite reflective) was used to analyze the entire measurement model (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2016). PLS was also preferred over covariance-based techniques because the purpose was to test a series of hypotheses rather than to achieve optimal model fit (Chin, 1998). The second-order constructs – knowledge self-enhancement and narcissism – were operationalized by means of the repeated indicators approach, based on the guidelines of Sarstedt *et al.* (2019).

4.5 Results

The respondents' demographics were similar to those in Study 1 (see Appendix 2). The sample was diverse, which supports some degree of generalizability of the findings. All respondents engaged in routine communication with their coworkers: on average, they interacted "occasionally" with their coworkers in person and "frequently" virtually on a typical workday, and everyone selected "occasionally" or higher on either in-person or virtual daily measures of interaction. This level of inter-employee interaction was sufficient to

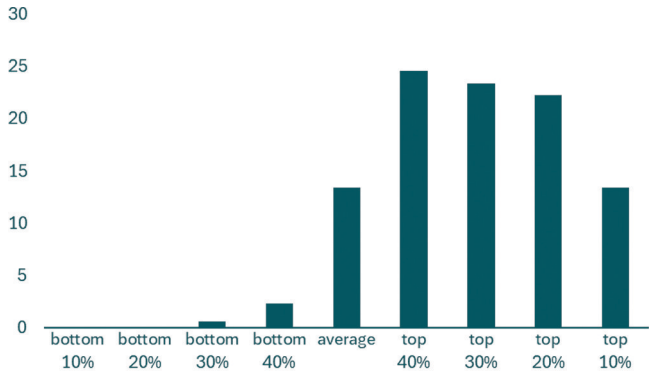
activate their narcissistic personality trait, if present, as per trait activation theory (Tett *et al.*, 2021).

Figures 7–10 visualize employee knowledge self-enhancement and, again, confirm its presence, as the mean has shifted to the right-hand side of the scale by approximately 20%.

Similar to Study 1, CMV was tested and ruled out. First, no statistically significant correlations were observed between the marker variable and the model's constructs at $p < 0.01$. Second, Harman's (1967) single-factor test showed that the first factor captured only 23% of the total variance. Third, as theoretically expected, negative correlations between productive knowledge behavior (i.e. knowledge sharing) and counterproductive knowledge behavior (i.e. knowledge sabotage and various forms of knowledge hiding) were observed, which is unlikely if CMV was present.

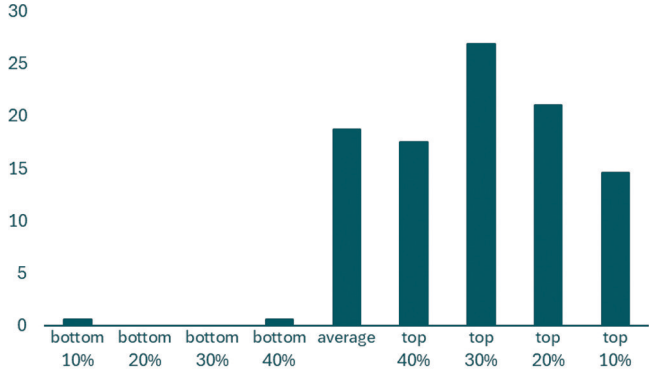
Confirmatory tetrad analysis (Gudergan *et al.*, 2008) indicated that all constructs should be positioned as reflective (at least 80% of all *p*-values and confidence intervals were non-

Figure 7 Declarative knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 2



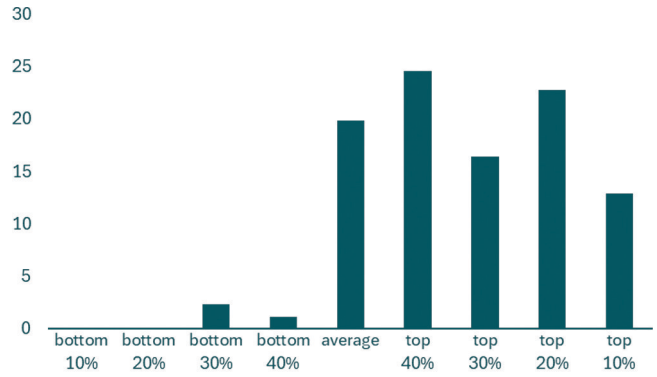
Source: Author's own work

Figure 8 Procedural knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 2



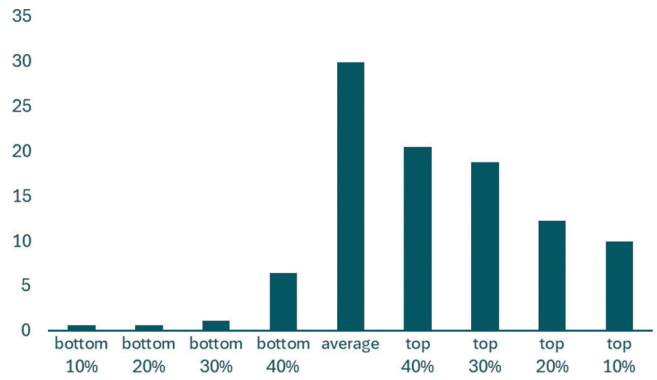
Source: Author's own work

Figure 9 Causal knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 2



Source: Author's own work

Figure 10 Relational knowledge self-enhancement – percentage of responses per category – Study 2



Source: Author's own work

significant). The narcissistic admiration construct had only 70% of all *p*-values and confidence intervals as non-significant, but it was retained as reflective because its second-order dimension and its other first-order dimension (narcissistic rivalry) met the 80% threshold. In addition, both first-order constructs (narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry) are best positioned as reflective from a conceptual perspective. All item loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$, and heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratios of correlations (Henseler *et al.*, 2015) were below 0.85. The variance inflation factors were less than 3.3 (Kock, 2015). All measures met the reliability thresholds (see Table 3). Table 4 confirms the discriminant validity of the constructs and shows that the square root of the average variance extracted exceeds the corresponding inter-construct correlations. Overall, the measurement model was reliable and valid (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

The statistical significance of the structural relationships was assessed with bootstrapping. All proposed relationships were significant (zero was not included in any confidence

Table 3 Study 2 – measurement model reliability assessment

Item	Mean	SD	ITC	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
DKSE1	6.69	1.59	0.82	0.908	0.870	0.872	0.720
DKSE2	6.73	1.57	0.73	0.853			
DKSE3	6.31	1.71	0.69	0.825			
DKSE4	7.42	1.49	0.66	0.804			
PKSE1	6.92	1.51	0.75	0.880	0.864	0.877	0.713
PKSE2	6.55	1.78	0.57	0.721			
PKSE3	6.95	1.61	0.79	0.894			
PKSE4	6.75	1.64	0.73	0.871			
CKSE1	6.29	1.74	0.77	0.880	0.885	0.894	0.749
CKSE2	6.59	1.65	0.87	0.937			
CKSE3	6.26	1.87	0.80	0.894			
CKSE4	7.27	1.59	0.58	0.736			
RKSE1	6.32	1.63	0.83	0.913	0.923	0.928	0.813
RKSE2	6.02	1.69	0.90	0.950			
RKSE3	6.13	1.72	0.84	0.915			
RKSE4	6.01	1.76	0.72	0.825			
KSPR1	4.67	2.34	0.89	0.916	0.960	0.967	0.783
KSPR2	4.57	2.37	0.91	0.932			
KSPR3	5.44	2.39	0.78	0.816			
KSPR4	3.99	2.34	0.89	0.924			
KSPR5	4.43	2.39	0.90	0.924			
KSPR6	4.25	2.40	0.86	0.893			
KSPR7	3.63	2.35	0.68	0.760			
KSPR8	3.75	2.33	0.85	0.898			
KS1	7.34	1.47	0.65	0.772	0.831	0.861	0.597
KS2	7.11	1.70	0.65	0.818			
KS3	7.46	1.38	0.65	0.803			
KS4	7.40	1.49	0.71	0.854			
KS5	6.67	1.52	0.49	0.588			
KHO1	4.94	2.30	0.62	0.769	0.886	0.892	0.749
KHO2	6.47	1.91	0.82	0.911			
KHO3	6.36	1.92	0.85	0.928			
KHO4	6.65	1.87	0.71	0.845			
KSA1	1.67	1.67	0.94	0.967	0.974	0.977	0.928
KSA2	1.68	1.72	0.92	0.950			
KSA3	1.77	1.75	0.95	0.973			
KSA4	1.74	1.68	0.93	0.963			
EKH1	2.14	1.61	0.83	0.888	0.913	0.966	0.788
EKH2	1.86	1.54	0.83	0.904			
EKH3	2.16	1.75	0.81	0.864			
EKH4	2.03	1.74	0.74	0.895			
PDKH1	1.95	1.44	0.86	0.917	0.915	0.989	0.794
PDKH2	2.01	1.59	0.86	0.944			
PDKH3	1.88	1.42	0.79	0.913			
PDKH4	2.52	1.97	0.70	0.781			
RKH1	2.22	1.75	0.76	0.875	0.881	0.904	0.737
RKH2	2.61	2.05	0.75	0.886			
RKH3	2.29	1.86	0.81	0.896			
RKH4	1.89	1.48	0.65	0.770			
BKH1	1.96	1.66	0.74	0.890	0.881	0.892	0.808
BKH2	2.18	1.74	0.73	0.868			
BKH3	1.95	1.74	0.83	0.938			
GKH1	1.91	1.44	0.78	0.930	0.896	0.958	0.824
GKH2	1.90	1.38	0.82	0.917			
GKH3	1.83	1.32	0.78	0.876			
NADM1	5.87	2.16	0.71	0.776	0.899	0.918	0.560
NADM2	3.21	2.45	0.64	0.740			
NADM8	4.77	2.50	0.78	0.844			

(*continued*)

Table 3

Item	Mean	SD	ITC	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
NADM3	4.25	2.29	0.76	0.840			
NADM5	6.89	1.72	0.55	0.614			
NADM15	4.51	2.53	0.75	0.827			
NADM7	4.53	2.37	0.60	0.687			
NADM16	3.57	2.27	0.76	0.833			
NADM18	6.25	2.04	0.44	0.498			
NRIV13	3.40	2.17	0.45	0.492	0.840	0.876	0.438
NRIV14	2.07	1.75	0.49	0.581			
NRIV17	2.41	1.84	0.61	0.689			
NRIV6	3.26	2.31	0.65	0.729			
NRIV9	3.50	2.25	0.56	0.635			
NRIV10	2.86	1.97	0.67	0.797			
NRIV4	3.01	2.08	0.58	0.751			
NRIV11	4.87	2.33	0.38	0.459			
NRIV12	2.34	1.71	0.56	0.739			

Note(s): SD – standard deviation; ITC – corrected item-to-total correlation; Alpha – Cronbach's alpha; CR – composite reliability; AVE – average variance extracted; DKSE – declarative knowledge self-enhancement; PKSE – procedural knowledge self-enhancement; CKSE – causal knowledge self-enhancement; RKSE – relational knowledge self-enhancement; KSPR – knowledge self-presentation; KS – knowledge sharing; KHO – knowledge hoarding; KSA – knowledge sabotage; EKH – evasive knowledge hiding; PDKH – playing dumb knowledge hiding; RKH – rationalized knowledge hiding; BKH – bullying knowledge hiding; GKH – general knowledge hiding; NADM – narcissistic admiration; NRIV – narcissistic rivalry
Source(s): Author's own work

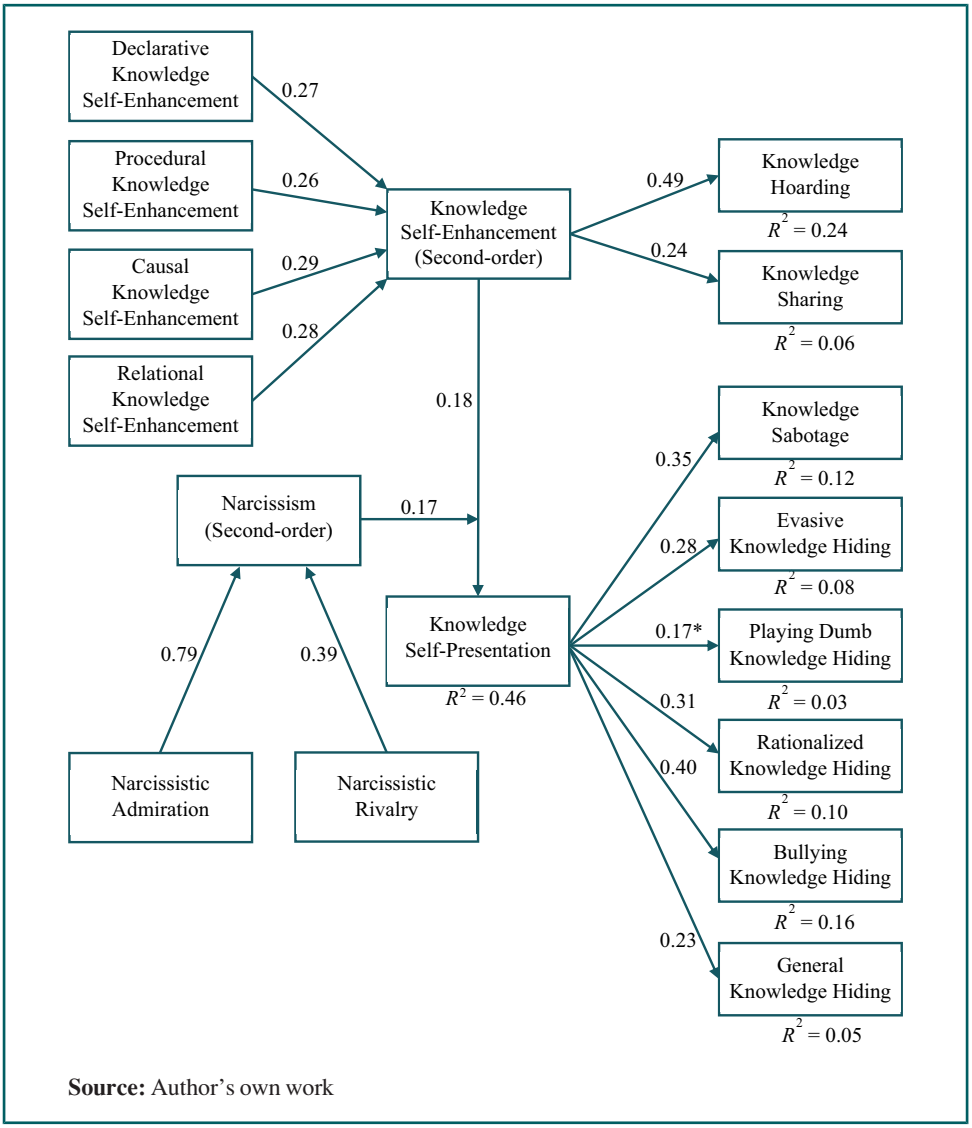
Table 4 Study 2 construct correlations

	DKSE	PKSE	CKSE	RKSE	KSPR	KS	KHO	KSA	EKH	PDKH	RKH	BKH	GKH	NADM	NRIV
DKSE	*0.849*														
PKSE	0.823	*0.844*													
CKSE	0.835	0.833	*0.865*												
RKSE	0.728	0.701	0.772	*0.902*											
KSPR	0.290	0.244	0.310	0.352	*0.885*										
KS	0.216	0.293	0.234	0.154	0.090	*0.773*									
KHO	0.462	0.447	0.499	0.399	0.248	0.401	*0.865*								
KSA	0.000	0.025	0.058	0.028	0.346	-0.136	0.069	*0.963*							
EKH	-0.073	-0.071	-0.060	0.016	0.282	-0.374	-0.109	0.567	*0.888*						
PDKH	-0.096	-0.110	-0.102	-0.107	0.170	-0.464	-0.133	0.380	0.699	*0.891*					
RKH	0.024	-0.040	-0.060	0.039	0.313	-0.236	-0.048	0.389	0.593	0.588	*0.858*				
BKH	-0.059	-0.148	-0.092	-0.020	0.396	-0.382	-0.119	0.458	0.643	0.592	0.611	*0.899*			
GKH	-0.009	-0.039	-0.029	0.017	0.232	-0.372	-0.053	0.439	0.674	0.726	0.547	0.602	*0.907*		
NADM	0.348	0.277	0.373	0.390	0.634	0.115	0.320	0.328	0.281	0.143	0.292	0.328	0.265	*0.748*	
NRIV	-0.011	-0.036	-0.051	-0.021	0.348	-0.331	-0.054	0.239	0.505	0.553	0.415	0.502	0.582	0.360	*0.662*

Note(s): The diagonal elements are the square root of the AVE of a respective construct. DKSE – declarative knowledge self-enhancement; PKSE – procedural knowledge self-enhancement; CKSE – causal knowledge self-enhancement; RKSE – relational knowledge self-enhancement; KSPR – knowledge self-presentation; KS – knowledge sharing; KHO – knowledge hoarding; KSA – knowledge sabotage; EKH – evasive knowledge hiding; PDKH – playing dumb knowledge hiding; RKH – rationalized knowledge hiding; BKH – bullying knowledge hiding; GKH – general knowledge hiding; NADM – narcissistic admiration; NRIV – narcissistic rivalry
Source(s): Author's own work

intervals) and in the hypothesized directions (see Figure 11). Thus, all hypotheses were supported. In addition, *PLSpredict* (Shmueli *et al.*, 2019) was used to generate predictions from all PLS path model estimations, which is somewhat analogous to fit indices in covariance-based SEM. All Q^2predict values for the dependent constructs were above

Figure 11 The structural model (* $p < 0.05$; all other p-values are below 0.005)



Source: Author's own work

zero, indicating that the proposed PLS model exhibits good predictive performance (Shmueli *et al.*, 2019).

4.6 Discussion

First, Study 2 observed the same knowledge self-enhancement tendency as discovered in Study 1: employees overstate their degree of professional knowledge by approximately 20% compared to that of their coworkers. Second, on its own, knowledge self-enhancement has a weak impact on knowledge self-presentation ($\beta = 0.18$, $R^2 = 0.03$). However, its effect is magnified when moderated by the narcissistic personality trait, which boosts the R^2 value from 0.03 to 0.46 (i.e. by 43%). The contribution of the narcissistic admiration dimension of the narcissistic personality trait to this moderating effect is much stronger than that of narcissistic rivalry. This is expected because narcissistic employees must publicly demonstrate their knowledge to be admired by others, whereas undermining their alleged knowledge rivals is likely a secondary objective.

Third, knowledge self-enhancement leads to knowledge hoarding – a behavior that may be considered productive or counterproductive depending on the context, but is generally neutral. Moreover, knowledge self-enhancement may serve a useful purpose by facilitating knowledge sharing. In sharp contrast, knowledge self-presentation is pernicious because it leads exclusively to counterproductive knowledge behavior, namely, knowledge sabotage and various forms of knowledge hiding. In particular, it strongly promotes bullying knowledge hiding ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.005$) (Yuan *et al.*, 2021; Kmieciak, 2024), which most likely occurs because this is the most aggressive type of knowledge hiding and is used to belittle potential knowledge competitors.

5. Implications

5.1 Implications for theory

First, this study empirically confirms that people's natural tendency to self-enhance their characteristics and abilities is also present in the workplace, thereby extending the previous research in psychology (Alicke *et al.*, 1995; Alicke and Govorun, 2005; Sedikides and Alicke, 2019). On a Likert-type scale ranging from the bottom 10% to the top 10%, the average self-reported level of knowledge was approximately 70%, indicating that workers, on average, overestimate their knowledge by about 20% relative to their coworkers. These findings support the argument by Zell *et al.* (2020) that the percentile method – where individuals rate their traits, abilities, and characteristics on a Likert-type scale – is an effective and rigorous approach for detecting self-enhancement bias. Second, this investigation supports previous research in other scholarly fields by showing that individuals tend to control how they are seen by others in various domains of life, including the workplace (Leary, 1996; Bolino and Turnley, 1999; Bolino *et al.*, 2008; Bolino *et al.*, 2016; Hollenbaugh, 2021; Debus *et al.*, 2024). It goes a step further by showing that employees exercise control over their image as knowledgeable workers to make an impression on their managers, coworkers, and subordinates. Third, this study presents two novel instruments that allow for the measurement of knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation constructs in the workplace. These new instruments may be used in various organizational contexts, offering significant opportunities for future research.

Fourth, this study reveals that it is critical to pay attention to the narcissistic personality trait, which dramatically amplifies the effect of knowledge self-enhancement (which is neutral or potentially productive) on knowledge self-presentation (which is counterproductive). According to trait activation theory (Tett and Guterman, 2000; Tett *et al.*, 2021; Serenko, 2025b), the narcissistic personality trait remains dormant until it is activated by a trait-relevant cue. The link between knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation is activated by a *distractor* cue because the strengthening of this relationship is counterproductive. In the workplace, various distractor cues are present, such as social gatherings at which narcissists may brag about their success; competitions and awards, which offer employees an opportunity to demonstrate their achievements; and high-pressure situations, which may threaten narcissists' status. If an employee possesses the narcissistic personality trait, exposure to a distractor cue activates his/her narcissistic personality trait, which, in turn, amplifies the effect of knowledge self-enhancement on knowledge self-presentation – ultimately leading to negative outcomes. In other words, the narcissistic personality trait is the main negative factor that should be scrutinized and kept under control through the elimination of distractor cues. Previous research has already identified a harmful effect of the narcissistic personality trait in the context of knowledge behavior (Shamsudin *et al.*, 2023; Long *et al.*, 2024), and this study supports this important line of inquiry.

Fifth, this study represents the first empirical attempt to understand the impact of knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation on productive and counterproductive knowledge behavior. It demonstrates the neutral and even positive effect

of the former and the highly pernicious impact of the latter. Discovering various antecedents of knowledge behavior is one of the most important lines of research in the knowledge management discipline (e.g. see Oliveira *et al.*, 2021), and the present investigation offers numerous opportunities for further advancement of knowledge management theory and practice. Finally, while this investigation advances scientific thought in general, it largely contributes to the knowledge management, organizational behavior, and psychology literatures. Drawing on these domains to develop its theoretical arguments, this study extends existing theories by clarifying the mechanisms underlying employees' knowledge behaviors.

5.2 Recommendations for practice and policy

Some managers may insist that they do not wish to employ a workforce in which every employee thinks that his/her job-related knowledge is above the average of the fellow coworkers. At first glance, it seems more prudent to develop a realistic assessment of one's professional knowledge to make better decisions instead of acting based on self-inflated beliefs. This assumption may seem correct, but there are opposite views that actually support self-enhancement (Taylor and Brown, 1988). The homeostatic model of identity protection (Sedikides, 2021) posits that beliefs about the possession of professional knowledge represent a crucial part of an employee's identity. Employee identity comprises various professional self-views that fulfill employees' psychological needs in the workplace – including a need for expert status, reputation, respect, and the recognition of knowledge, skills and expertise. Developing and maintaining a desired professional identity is critical, given that individuals spend a major part of their lives in the workplace.

The turbulent, uncontrollable, and unpredictable contemporary workplace takes its toll on employees, leading to exhaustion and burnout (Edú-Valsania *et al.*, 2022). Sudden changes in customer preferences, technological advancements, and increasing competitive pressures (Bodlaj and Čater, 2019) can negate the best individual efforts and doom the most innovative ideas. This can undermine employees' identities as successful, prudent, and hard-working individuals; point to real or imagined deficiencies in their professional knowledge; and result in an unpleasant psychological state. The discrepancy between how employees want to view themselves and how they are actually perceived in light of real-life job outcomes determines their emotional state (Sedikides, 2021). In this way, knowledge self-enhancement can serve as a psychological harm-protection system that regulates these discrepancies by guarding the desired self-views. By exaggerating their knowledge, employees may feel good about themselves from a professional perspective despite negative external pressures: employees who engage in knowledge self-enhancement may develop psychological immunity (Koole, 2021) to stressful workplace events that might otherwise negatively affect their mental state. This, in turn, may lead to higher job satisfaction and lower voluntary turnover, which is considered an Achilles' heel of the contemporary knowledge-based organization (Daghfous *et al.*, 2013; Massingham, 2018). As such, knowledge self-enhancement is not harmful *per se* and may even lead to knowledge sharing.

Managers should realize that their organizations should not try to preselect new workers or educate existing ones to accurately align their knowledge self-views with reality. Knowledge self-enhancement is virtually universal, which rules out the preselection idea. It is also so deeply etched in people's minds that it would not be efficient to attempt to modify it. Thus, this study recommends that managers embrace the notion of knowledge self-enhancement within their workplace; instead, managers should prescreen job applicants for the narcissistic personality trait. To do so, organizations may employ the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (Back *et al.*, 2013), administered by trained psychometricians or human resource professionals, while interpreting the results ethically and keeping legal implications in mind. With respect to current employees, managers should identify and remove distractor cues that activate these workers' narcissistic personality trait (Serenko, 2025b). For example, they may reduce the volume of socialization-based and competitive

activities for narcissistic individuals. To achieve this, organizations may conduct audits of workplace dynamics to identify and limit highly competitive and status-oriented activities that may trigger the narcissistic personality trait. The aim is to suppress the expression of employees' narcissistic personality trait and reduce their knowledge self-presentation, which, in turn, may eventually decrease their counterproductive knowledge behavior.

Focusing on employees' mental health is also extremely critical in the contemporary fast-paced, stressful work environment. In particular, managers should avoid emphasizing the stigma associated with personality disorders (Hinshaw and Cicchetti, 2000), because this may prevent their workers from seeking mental health support. Instead, they need to offer insurance coverage and programs for the treatment of personality disorders (Mulvale and Hurley, 2008) and assist their employees who are seeking help. Large organizations may also partner with leading mental health providers to offer accessible, stigma-free mental health services. Moreover, discriminating against job applicants based on their preexisting mental conditions may be illegal in some jurisdictions.

Another approach is to educate employees about knowledge self-presentation concepts by offering short training modules and workshops on cognitive biases during onboarding and team-building sessions, using real-world examples and citing scholarly evidence. Equipped with this knowledge, workers may be able to identify extreme knowledge self-presenters and become aware of their counterproductive knowledge behavior. For instance, they may verify the key facts and critical information conveyed by such individuals to ensure that they do not become knowledge sabotage victims, which may cost both them and their organizations dearly. Recognizing and addressing the issues above may enhance communication between knowledge managers and their subordinates and facilitate more effective organizational knowledge flows.

In addition, this study offers implications for policy and society. First, it is important to reconsider how professional competence is interpreted at the societal level. Instead of stigmatizing or discouraging exaggerated self-confidence, public discourse should recognize that modest self-enhancement may serve as a protective psychological mechanism in uncertain environments. Thus, mental health advocacy groups and labor policy bodies should develop public education campaigns that destigmatize psychological coping mechanisms – such as mild knowledge self-enhancement – and promote balanced mental resilience in the workplace. Second, this study highlights the dangers of an unchecked narcissistic personality trait, which, when activated, may drive harmful knowledge self-presentation, leading to counterproductive knowledge behavior. Personality disorders are widespread in contemporary society (Millon, 2011; Millon *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, public regulatory bodies and professional associations should incorporate personality screening and ethical training into leadership certification programs to mitigate the societal risks of narcissistic behaviors in high-impact roles.

6. Limitations, future research directions, and conclusion

As with other scholarly endeavors, this study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of the data collection may have introduced CMV. Although this was unlikely given the rigorous testing reported in sections 3.6 and 4.5, it cannot be ruled out with certainty. Second, despite employing multiple approaches to minimize social desirability bias, it can never be fully avoided, as individuals naturally tend to present themselves positively even in anonymous surveys. Third, because the data were collected via a crowdsourcing platform, it is not possible to calculate a response rate. Consequently, self-selection bias may have influenced the findings. Fourth, cultural influences and organizational contexts may moderate or mediate the relationships tested in Study 2. For instance, economic, cultural, and geopolitical differences across countries (Henrich *et al.*, 2010; Apicella *et al.*, 2020) can shape individuals' workplace perceptions and behaviors (Palvia *et al.*, 2024). Organizational climate and policies may affect workers' expression of narcissism. Finally, this study analyzed employees' self-

enhancement and self-presentation of knowledge, though it is possible that workers exhibit similar tendencies in relation to their practical wisdom – a relatively new yet important construct in management studies (Jakubik and Müürsepp, 2022; Jakubik, 2023; Serenko, 2024; Serenko, 2025a). Future research should take these limitations into account and explore strategies to address them.

In conclusion, this study introduced two novel constructs – knowledge self-enhancement and knowledge self-presentation – that touch upon issues that have hitherto been ignored in mainstream knowledge management research. Study 1 developed and validated a survey-based research instrument to measure these constructs, and Study 2 demonstrated their predictive power in the context of productive and counterproductive knowledge behavior. Study 2 also hypothesized and confirmed the detrimental role of the narcissistic personality trait, which amplifies the impact of knowledge self-enhancement (neutral or positive) on knowledge self-presentation (negative). The author hopes that the results of this study will inspire future knowledge management researchers and help them generate truly useful practical recommendations and guidelines.

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Note

[1.] The unorthodox style adopted in this section is a direct response to the critique of management papers by Tourish (2020, p. 108), who urges that "it is time to write about management and organizations with less obscure theorizing, with more variety, and with a little more humor, curiosity, and passion." This style also responds to the recent call by Bal *et al.* (2025) to suppress "academic rackets" in management research while promoting creativity and fostering academic freedom. Tourish, D. (2020), "The triumph of nonsense in management studies", *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 99-109. Bal, P. M., van Rossenberg, Y. and Orhan, M. A. (2025), "Manifestation of academic rackets in management research through early career sessions at academic conferences", *Management Learning*, Vol. 56 No. 2, pp. 254-283.

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Appendix 1. Study 1 – questionnaire

Instructions: You must be currently employed full-time for at least 2 years in an organization that has 10 or more employees.

For how many years have you worked in your current organization? (open-ended)

How many employees does your current organization have? (open-ended)

Your current organization is: (private, public, other – please specify).

Please answer all questions below in the context of the organization in which you are currently employed full-time.

Knowledge self-enhancement

Please rate your level of job-related knowledge compared to that of your coworkers in your current organization.

Compared to your coworkers, how would you rate your: (nine-point Likert-type scale: bottom 10%; bottom 20%; bottom 30%; bottom 40%; about the average; top 40%; top 30%; top 20%; top 10%)

Declarative knowledge self-enhancement

DKSE1. Knowledge of the products and/or services offered by your organization.

DKSE2. Knowledge of unique customer needs and preferences.

DKSE3. Knowledge of industry trends and job-related news.

DKSE4. Knowledge related to your specific job role.

Procedural knowledge self-enhancement

PKSE1. Knowledge of operating procedures, processes, and routines.

PKSE2. Knowledge of IT tools required to complete your job tasks.

PKSE3. Knowledge of effective problem-solving approaches.

PKSE4. Knowledge of how your organization functions.

Causal knowledge self-enhancement

CKSE1. Knowledge of the drivers of organizational productivity.

CKSE2. Knowledge of the factors leading to better employee performance.

CKSE3. Knowledge of approaches to properly motivate employees.

CKSE4. Knowledge of how to do your job very effectively.

Relational knowledge self-enhancement

RKSE1. Knowledge of formal and informal professional networks within your organization to share advice, recommendations, best practices, important documents, etc.

RKSE2. Knowledge of formal and informal professional networks within your organization to facilitate collaboration and exchange ideas.

RKSE3. Knowledge of effective and efficient intra-organizational collaboration methods.

RKSE4. Knowledge of the web of relationships among coworkers.

Knowledge self-presentation

When I interact with my fellow coworkers, I routinely: (nine-point Likert-type scale: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – moderately disagree; 4 – slightly disagree; 5 – neutral; 6 – slightly agree; 7 – moderately agree; 8 – agree; 9 – strongly agree)

KSPR1. Let them know that I am a highly knowledgeable employee.

KSPR2. Make them aware of my high level of professional knowledge.

KSPR3. Show them that I possess important job-related knowledge.

KSPR4. Deliberately emphasize the fact that I am very knowledgeable.

KSPR5. Make sure that they are aware of my high level of job-related knowledge.

KSPR6. Try to persuasively position myself as an extremely knowledgeable employee.

KSPR7. Act like I know everything about my job.

KSPR8. Clearly point out my high level of knowledge.

Socially desirable responding – self-deceptive enhancement

Please answer each question below with respect to yourself. There are no right or wrong answers and no trick questions. Work quickly and do not think too long about the exact meaning of the questions. (nine-point Likert-type scale: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – moderately disagree; 4 – slightly disagree; 5 – neutral; 6 – slightly agree; 7 – moderately agree; 8 – agree; 9 – strongly agree)

BSE1. I have not always been honest with myself. (R)

BSE2. I always know why I like things.

BSE3. It's hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought. (R)

BSE4. I never regret my decisions.

BSE5. I sometimes lose out on things because I can't make up my mind soon enough. (R)

BSE6. I am a completely rational person.

BSE7. I am very confident of my judgments.

BSE8. I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover. (R)

Socially desirable responding – impression management

BIM1. I sometimes tell lies if I have to. (R)

BIM2. I never cover up my mistakes.

BIM3. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone. (R)

BIM4. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget. (R)

BIM5. I have said something bad about a friend behind his or her back. (R)

BIM6. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.

BIM7. I never take things that don't belong to me.

BIM8. I don't gossip about other people's business.

(R) – negatively worded items (must be reversed).

Lying

Please answer each question below with respect to yourself. There are no right or wrong answers and no trick questions. Work quickly and do not think too long about the exact meaning of the questions. (Scale: Yes/No)

LIE1. If you say you will do something, do you always keep your promise no matter how inconvenient it might be?

LIE2. Were you ever greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything?

LIE3. Have you ever blamed someone for doing something you knew was really your fault?

LIE4. Are *all* your habits good and desirable ones?

LIE5. Have you ever taken anything (even a pin or button) that belonged to someone else?

LIE6. Have you ever broken or lost something belonging to someone else?

LIE7. Have you ever said anything bad or nasty about anyone?

LIE8. As a child were you ever cheeky to your parents?

LIE9. Have you ever cheated at a game?

LIE10. Have you ever taken advantage of someone?

LIE11. Do you always practice what you preach?

LIE12. Do you sometimes put off until tomorrow what you ought to do today?

Coding: Yes: 1, 4, 11. No: 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12. Assign 1 point for each Yes or No above. E.g. if the responded answered Yes on LIE4, assign a score of 1, otherwise assign a score of 0.

Overclaiming

Please indicate how familiar you are with each person, place, or thing. (seven-point Likert-type scale: 1 – never heard of; 2 – rarely heard of; 3 – slightly familiar; 4 – moderately familiar; 5 – familiar; 6 – very familiar; 7 – extremely familiar)

Items: Torquemada; Ronald Reagan; The Luddites; El Puente*; Pullman paintings*; Mona Lisa; harpsichord; Pooh Bah; myth; aphorism; sentence stigma*; synonym; Manhattan Project; nuclear fusion; plates of parallax*; nebula; centripetal force; Charlotte Bronte; Venus; Doctor Fehr*; Mrs. Malaprop; megaphrenia*; trust-busting; behaviorism; Christian Science; Napoleon; Gloucestershire; My Lai; The Lusitania; Wounded Knee; Mozart; Mario Lanza; Vermeer; euphemism; ampersand; blank verse; shunt-word*; hyperbole; cholerine*; atomic number; photon; alloy; plate tectonics; Bulldog Graziano*; Romeo and Juliet; Lewis Carroll; placebo; ombudsman; yellow journalism; consumer apparatus*.

Note: * - foils (nonexistent items)

Marker variable

In terms of my future travel plans, I will go on a trip in the next six months. (nine-point Likert-type scale: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – moderately disagree; 4 – slightly disagree; 5 – neutral; 6 – slightly agree; 7 – moderately agree; 8 – agree; 9 – strongly agree)

Appendix 2. Demographics

Table A1 Demographic profile of respondents

Item	Study 1	Study 2
Avg. years of overall work experience	14 (ranging from 2 to 45)	16 (ranging from 2 to 54)
Avg. years of work experience in the current organization	7 (ranging from 2 to 32)	7 (ranging from 2 to 34)
Type of organization	Private – 70%; Public – 30%	Private – 64%; Public – 36%
Median number of employees	173 (ranging from 10 to 250,000)	200 (ranging from 10 to 300,000)
% of SME organizations (10–499 employees)	67%	61%
% of large organizations (500+ employees)	33%	39%
Avg. age	35 (ranging from 18 to 68)	37 (ranging from 18 to 72)
Education	High school or less – 14% Associate degree (2 years) or some college – 15% Bachelor's degree – 49% Master's degree – 20% Doctoral degree – 2%	High school or less – 11% Associate degree (2 years) or some college – 26% Bachelor's degree – 49% Master's degree – 12% Doctoral degree – 2%
Gender	Men – 58%; women – 41; other – 1%	Men – 56%; women – 43; other – 1%

Source(s): Author's own work

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