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More Than Being Seen: A Taxonomy of Workplace Visibility Behaviors and Their Differential Effects on Career Outcomes

Dr. Tim Hampel

tim.hampel@gmx.net

Karlsruher Institut of Technology https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1599-9860

Dr. Nora Hampel

University of Hohenheim https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9127-3965

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Abstract

Visibility in the workplace is widely recognized by both scholars and practitioners as a key determinant of career success. Despite its importance for individual career advancement, visibility in most cases is operationalized as a binary distinction between being present or absent in the physical workplace. In this study, we argue that visibility is a more multifaceted construct containing different behavioral strategies that go beyond pure presence in the workplace. Drawing on a sequential mixed-method design, Study 1 utilized qualitative interviews (N = 18) with managers of two large German corporations to derive a taxonomy of visibility behavior strategies of employees. Study 2 (N = 240) quantitatively tested the differential effects of these strategies on two central indicators of career success—job performance and interpersonal success. Findings revealed that upward networking, disseminative capacity, and proactive behavior significantly predicted job performance, while helping behavior predicted interpersonal success. Pure workplace presence was unrelated to either outcome. These results advance a dual-pathway model of workplace visibility—performance-based and relational—offering theoretical refinement and practical guidance for managing visibility in increasingly hybrid organizational contexts. Theoretical and practical implications are outlined, along with limitations and directions for future research.

1. Introduction

Ask any successful person for career advice, and at least part of the answer will include making sure to become visible with the results of your hard work. By nature, it is hard to form an attitude toward something that has not been seen or heard of, where little information is available to render a verdict. Under the term visibility in the workplace, previous research has demonstrated strong links between the visibility associated with full-time employment and available career opportunities (Ginn et al., 1996; Junor, 1998; McDonald et al., 2008; Sheridan, 2004). Related concepts such as 'presenteeism'—attending work while ill (Johns, 2010; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019)—and 'careerism'—being constantly available to the organization (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Jain & Sullivan, 2019)—echo scholarly findings but also personal anecdotes of the necessity of being seen and noticed by others to elevate one's career (Wilding, 2024). Besides being recognized as an important construct for career success in organizations, visibility in most cases is operationalized as being physically present in the workplace versus being absent (invisibility; Buchanan & Settles, 2019; Chaboki et al., 2013). This is reflected by measures of workplace visibility such as part-time work, flexible work arrangements, or career interruptions (e.g., parental leave) (McDonald et al., 2008; van Osch & Schaveling, 2020). However, among employees who are physically present in the workplace, not everyone is recognized, appreciated, and can embark on a fruitful career. To the best of our knowledge, little is known so far about the individual-level strategies employees perform in order to become recognized and acknowledged while being physically present in the workplace. Especially in hierarchical organizational structures where promotions are dependent on a few individuals with decision-making power, how do employees become recognized and stand out in the eyes of decision makers?

In this study, we argue that visibility is a more multifaceted construct containing different behavioral strategies that go beyond pure presence in the workplace. By employing a mixed-method research design, we add to the literature on organizational behavior an individual-level analysis of employee visibility behavior and the relationship to job performance and interpersonal success, as two central measures of career success (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986; Shockley et al., 2016).

To explore the multifaceted nature of visibility in the workplace, our research is guided by two research questions: (RQ1) What behavioral strategies do employees employ in order to become visible in the workplace, and (RQ2) how do these strategies relate to job performance and interpersonal success in the workplace? In Study 1 of our research, we conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with managers in two large German corporations to formulate hypotheses of the different visibility behavior strategies. In Study 2, we tested our hypotheses in a quantitative study with N = 240 alumni of a German university. In doing so, we shed more light on the multifaceted nature of visibility in the workplace and the relationship to individual career success.

2. Literature review

Visibility in the workplace is commonly defined as the degree to which an employee's work and contributions are recognized and acknowledged by colleagues, managers, and key decision-makers within an organization. It involves being seen not just physically but professionally in order to ensure that one's efforts and achievements are noticed and valued (Leonardi & Treem, 2020; McDonald et al., 2008; Wilding, 2024).

Previous research has established a strong link between the time devoted to work and available career opportunities. As one of the first studies in this area, Schwartz (1989) found that women who returned to the workplace part-time following a birth faced career disadvantages as being labeled as 'mommy track' workers. Since then, a large number of studies have investigated the effects of reduced working hours (i.e., part-time work) on career development and opportunities. In a qualitative study, part-time employees reported less respect, an assumed lack of commitment, and even discriminatory behavior by colleagues accompanied by a personal feeling of defensiveness about their status. Additionally, most of them reported a loss of their eligibility to share in the year-end bonus pool due to a perceived lack of performance compared to full-time employees (Corwin et al., 2001). In this vein, a part-time wage gap was observed. Because promotions are an important source of wage growth, it was found that individuals in part-time jobs experience a lower rate of promotions relative to workers in full-time, especially among more mature part-time employees (Russo & Hassink, 2008; Whittock et al., 2002). Closely related, it was found that part-time employees experience less access to participatory management practices than full-time employees, which diminishes access to participation in decision making. As the share of female part-time employees is higher in comparison with their male colleagues, women are more affected by wage differences and reduced career opportunities (Markey et al., 2002). In general, the literature on working hours suggests that part-time employment hampers career advancement, especially for women. Van Osch & Schaveling (2020) challenged this view by finding that men working part-time experienced less career progress and development than men who are employed full-time and women in general, where the results are explained by gender-role incongruence. Also, managers who had a vivid career while working full-time reported a stall in their career once a transition to part-time work was made (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010). Especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work (i.e., telework, work from home, offsite work) and the work-home relationship have gained attention by scholars (Hampel & Hampel, 2023; Yarberry & Sims, 2021). While early studies on this subject suggest that managers and employees believe remote work will reduce their visibility and consequently their career advancement (Khalifa & Davison, 2000), more recent studies argue that remote work increases work-related productivity, autonomy, and self-leadership (Galanti et al., 2021; George et al., 2022). Specifically, recent studies on remote work and workplace visibility demonstrate that, in addition to meeting formal performance targets while working remotely, there is a perceived need to maintain and enhance visibility in order to ensure career progression and continued employment (Hafermalz, 2021; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2021; Richardson & Kelliher, 2015).

Another closely related concept to visibility in the workplace is *impression management*—the conscious or unconscious process by which individuals attempt to influence others' perceptions of them. This involves regulating information in social interactions to present oneself favorably (Abbas et al., 2019; Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Common strategies include self-promotion, ingratiation, and exemplification. In the workplace, impression management is often employed to appear competent, trustworthy, or likable to colleagues and supervisors (Marini et al., 2024). While both impression management and workplace visibility aim to influence how one is perceived professionally, impression management involves active strategies to control others' impressions, whereas workplace visibility centers on making one's contributions recognized and acknowledged within the organizational context (Chawla et al., 2021).

In sum, recent research on visibility in the workplace has mainly centered around the time devoted to work and the possible individual deteriorating effects of reduced workplace presence in hybrid, flexible, or part-time work arrangements. With our following research, we aim to close this research gap by examining the individual-level behavior strategies employees perform to ensure their efforts are recognized and valued within the organizational context.

3. Overview of current approach

To gain a better understanding of how employees increase their visibility in the workplace, we adopted a sequential mixed-method approach. In our first study, we conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with managers of two large German

corporations in the automotive industry. Based on the findings from our first study, we formulated hypotheses of the different visibility behavior strategies and tested them in a quantitative design.

Our decision to begin with a qualitative design derived from three main considerations. First, a qualitative approach (e.g., interviews, focus groups) is useful when limited knowledge exists about a phenomenon (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). In the case of visibility in the workplace, little is known so far about how employees turn workplace presence into being recognized and remembered by key decision makers and colleagues. With our qualitative approach, we aim to explore the multifaceted nature of visibility in the workplace that goes beyond purely time devoted to work.

Second, qualitative research allows the researcher to explore emerging themes during the research process (Bartunek & Seo, 2002). Especially when employing semi-structured interviews, as in our case, a primary benefit is that it permits interviews to be focused while still giving the investigator the autonomy to explore emerging ideas that may come up in the course of the interview, which can further enhance the understanding of the research object (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Thus, given our goal to not just collect visibility strategies but also to understand their relation to job performance and interpersonal success, a qualitative approach seemed useful.

Finally, a qualitative approach can help to distinguish between a given phenomenon and related ones (Howell & Avolio, 1992). In the case of visibility in the workplace, we found three related concepts—presenteeism, careerism, and impression management. Regarding presenteeism and careerism, our review revealed that both concepts center around workplace presence but in the sense that employees must not only work full-time but also must avoid regular or sustained absences to be deemed worthy of a career pathway and the opportunity to work on high-profile projects (Jain & Sullivan, 2019; McDonald et al., 2008; Sheridan, 2004). Given the fact that among employees who are present in the workplace not everyone can embark on a fruitful career, we believe that our qualitative approach can shed more light on the relevance of (chronic) workplace presence for becoming recognized and acknowledged by organizational members.

Furthermore, visibility in the workplace and impression management are both strategies employed by individuals to enhance their professional standing and career advancement (Abbas et al., 2019; Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Although they share the common objective of gaining recognition and shaping perceptions, they differ in focus, mechanisms, and intent. While visibility emphasizes being noticed for one's work, presence, and contributions, impression management involves actively shaping the interpretation of one's actions and traits to align with desired perceptions, such as competence, authority, or approachability (Marini et al., 2024). By employing semi-structured interviews with 18 managers, we are interested in exactly those behavioral visibility strategies that enable employees to become recognized and acknowledged. Based on the findings of our qualitative study, we formulate hypotheses of the different visibility behavior strategies.

In Study 2, we tested our hypotheses in a quantitative study with N = 240 alumni of a German university. This mixed-method approach allows us to pursue both the exploratory and confirmatory nature of our research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). Also, the sequential design determines the chronological course of the examination in advance. In our case, we chose a qualitative-quantitative chronology in order to use the findings from our exploratory research question (what behavioral strategies do employees employ in order to become visible in the workplace?) to conduct a confirmatory analysis to answer our second research question (how do these strategies relate to job performance and interpersonal success in the workplace?). Finally, we provide conclusions from this pair of studies and offer future research directions as well as practical recommendations.

4. Study 1

4.1. Method

Study 1 seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of visibility in the workplace. Hence, this first study aims to answer our RQ1. To unpack visibility behavior in the context of job performance and interpersonal success, we used semi-structured interviews

to allow unexpected themes to emerge. We begin by describing the data collection and analyses in the following.

4.1.1. Data collection

We conducted 18 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with managers of two corporations in the automotive industry. The semi-structured interview method was chosen because it allows questions to be focused on specific themes while still leaving space for participants to add new meanings to the topic (Galletta, 2013). We decided on a two-company case because we wanted to avoid a too narrow view of the culture and organizational norms of just one organization. We recruited initial interview participants from two university partner firms via a personal email. In order to avoid self-selection bias, we asked for recommendations of additional interview participants with at least 3 years of management experience and firm-internal tenure. Interview participants (5 female, 13 male) held the job titles of team lead (11), department manager (6), and director (1). We focused on participants with leadership experience because of both personal accounts of visibility behavior and leadership observations. We stopped data collection after 18 interviews as we determined that theoretical saturation had been achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Prior to the interview, participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the study. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring that participation was voluntary and that participants had the option to withdraw at any time without consequence. In order to establish a common understanding of the phenomenon of interest but at the same time allow for individual interpretations, we provided participants with a broad definition of workplace visibility as the degree to which an employee's work and contributions are recognized and acknowledged by colleagues, managers, and key decision-makers within an organization. Although interview participants were invited to ask clarifying questions about the concept and definition, most of them did not request further explanations. Four major themes were covered during the semi-structured interviews: (a) an own interpretation of productive visibility behavior in the workplace; (b) an account of one's own career path with a focus on critical incidents; (c) an observation of visibility behavior with a focus on individual career progression; (d) a narrative of how visibility can be implemented in organizational practice by employees.

4.1.2. Data analysis

Following the principles outlined by Corbin & Strauss (2014), we conducted multiple rounds of axial and selective coding, linking categories to their subcategories and integrating them within existing theoretical frameworks. In line with previous research (Bartunek & Seo, 2002; McDonald et al., 2008), we iteratively engaged with both the relevant literature and our data to establish connections between emerging constructs and established theories. Additionally, our review of research on workplace visibility (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2021; Leonardi & Treem, 2020), presenteeism and careerism (Jain & Sullivan, 2019; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019), and impression management (Marini et al., 2024) enabled us to align the identified behavioral visibility strategies with existing classifications. To facilitate the coding process, we structured the data utilizing spreadsheets, memos, and notes. Once the coding scheme was finalized, two authors independently reanalyzed the interview transcripts and coding notes for all 18 interviews. In a series of meetings, we compared coding results, refined category definitions, and made minor adjustments. Any discrepancies were discussed by articulating the reasoning behind each coding decision until a consensus was reached.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Functions of workplace visibility

The first topic we sought to address was which functions visibility in the workplace with a focus on career success fulfills. In this vein, the first superordinate category that emerged during our coding process was *performance-based visibility*. As multiple interviewees stated, visibility in the workplace is a critical factor of reciprocal knowledge transfer, being able to receive and share new and relevant information and to use it for one's own work-related tasks. As one participant described:

"In fact, when you are at the office you will get new information regardless of whether you want it or not, and I am sure that gives you an advantage over your colleagues sitting at home."

Furthermore, performance-based visibility encompasses the extent to which employees gain recognition and career advancement opportunities. However, with regard to the extent of self-directed visibility in the workplace, interviewees

differentiated between *active* and *passive* workplace visibility. Active visibility behavior was described as deliberate actions to gain recognition. Employees who engage in active visibility take steps such as proactively volunteering for high-profile projects, speaking up in meetings, self-promoting their achievements, or seeking mentorship. These behaviors require conscious effort to ensure that their contributions are seen by decision-makers. One participant stated:

"One strategy I learned which is mandatory for a career in a large hierarchical organization is what I call it, do good and talk about it. And it means to actively look for ways to disseminate your work results through various channels within the organization."

In contrast, passive visibility behavior emerged as a more ambiguous concept, which we therefore actively addressed during our interviews. On the one hand, some participants described passive visibility as a way through which an employee's work naturally gains recognition without intentional self-promotion. This can result from consistently strong performance, word-of-mouth recommendations, or being in a visible role where contributions are inherently noticed. On the other hand, passive visibility is described as the opposite of active visibility, where employees are merely present, reserved, and not actively seeking recognition from organizational members, as one participant described:

"Imagine a corporation with more than one hundred thousand employees, if you just sit there and not make a move you will perish within the organizational noise."

With regard to the functions of workplace visibility, the second superordinate category that we explored was *relational visibility*. Here, participants referred to behavioral visibility strategies for gaining and establishing social connections and interactions with other members of the organization. In this vein, they highlighted the role of networking, helping behavior, or knowledge sharing to build up a firm-internal network. As one interviewee mentioned:

"In our department it is important that we have a certain level of trust among each other, and you can only build that up if you actively participate in what is happening."

Therefore, relational visibility and performance-based visibility complement each other. While performance-based visibility focuses on recognition through active contribution and achievements, relational visibility is about gaining recognition through interpersonal connections, networking, and building relationships within the organization. As one interviewee mentioned:

"Interpersonal contacts open the doors to new opportunities."

4.2.2. Visibility behavior strategies

Next, we aimed to determine the behavioral strategies employees perform in order to become visible in the workplace, that is—how do employees turn workplace presence into being recognized and acknowledged by colleagues, managers, and key decision-makers within an organization. Here, seven overarching categories of visibility behavior strategies emerged during the qualitative investigation: (1) *proactive behavior, (2) individual disseminative capacity, (3) upward networking, (4) firm-internal networking, (5) knowledge collection, (6) helping behavior, and (7) workplace presence* (see Fig. 1). We will discuss these overarching categories in more detail below.

Proactive behavior describes self-starting actions by enabling employees to take initiative in seeking leadership opportunities, propose new ideas, participate in problem solving, and actively engage in high-impact projects. Proactive employees, therefore, do not rely solely on passive recognition but strategically create opportunities to increase their exposure to key decision-makers. Also, previous research has referred to proactive behavior not only as a critical determinant of organizational success but also as a means to become visible in the workplace by demonstrating curiosity and interest (Bohlmann & Zacher, 2021; Crant, 2000). As one of our interview participants described it:

"For me a proactive and curious behavior is the essence of becoming noticed by senior managers. But one should be selective in the projects or initiatives he chooses because quality always beats quantity."

Next, *individual disseminative capacity* refers to an employee's ability and willingness to share and communicate work-related results in a way that makes them more visible and recognized within the organization. In contrast to the well-known concept of absorptive capacity from the organizational learning literature—an organization's ability to recognize, understand, assimilate, and apply new knowledge—disseminative capacity refers to the extent employees actively seek opportunities to distribute their work results and at the same time are able to convey even complex topics (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zahra & George, 2002). As one of our interview participants stated:

"I remember this colleague of mine and what I really admired about him was his ability to adjust his presentation style depending on the situation and audience. He presented in front of line workers and he received good feedback. The next day he presented to the CEO and received recognition."

Therefore, disseminative capacity in the context of visibility in the workplace contains two cornerstones. First, to actively seek opportunities to share work-related information and knowledge, and second, to convey this information in a comprehensible and competent fashion.

Upward networking in the context of visibility in the workplace refers to the process of building professional relationships with individuals who hold higher positions in the organizational hierarchy, such as managers, executives, or senior leaders. It allows employees to be noticed by those who have the power to influence career advancement, assign important projects, or provide mentorship. This can lead to greater access to opportunities, inclusion in strategic conversations, and stronger support for promotions or leadership roles. From our interviews, upward networking can come in different forms such as asking managers or executives for advice, seeking guidance, sharing personal experiences, or receiving the latest information. Through these interactions, upward networking is a strategic way to build meaningful connections with higher-level colleagues in order to gain recognition, expand influence, and increase one's visibility at work. As one interview participant shares his personal experience:

"For me a key moment was when I presented to the management and after the presentation I could stay in the room for a couple of minutes. Then, I was approached with an additional question or one time the manager asked me about my experiences I gained abroad. This is a valid strategy to get close into contact with executives."

Firm-internal networking is a concept that has been linked to career success in various previous studies (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; De Vos et al., 2009; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Internal networking helps employees build relationships across different departments and teams within the organization. These internal connections can lead to increased collaboration, better access to information, and stronger support for one's ideas or projects (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). Also, in the context of workplace visibility, our interview participants link internal networking to the exposure of new and distant colleagues. As one interview participant stated, these connections are difficult to establish in mobile working arrangements:

"I am a strong believer that networking in mobile work arrangements does not work well. Having a nice chat or getting into contact with new colleagues mostly happens accidentally. All the initiatives to boost online networking do not work for me when someone is invisible hiding behind their workstation at home."

Knowledge collection, in contrast to firm-internal networking, was described as an event-related approach to organizational members based on the systematic process of gathering, organizing, and managing the knowledge held by other employees within the organization. This approach encompasses gathering both explicit knowledge—such as documents, manuals, and reports—and tacit knowledge, which includes personal insights, experiences, and skills. In addition, knowledge collection as a visibility strategy was linked to demonstrating curiosity and a positive attitude towards learning. As one interviewed senior manager reported:

"When I recognize someone who is actively approaching other colleagues, who is asking questions and is seriously interested in the work of others, not only his own work. That sends a signal to me that this person wants to benefit the company and is searching for ways he can add value to the company."

Helping behavior was described during our interviews as a trait that encompasses offering active support to colleagues or stepping in during high-pressure moments. This increases visibility in a direct and indirect way. Directly, offering help is perceived as reliable, capable, and resourceful. Helping behavior reflects initiative and teamwork which directly might get noticed positively by management. Secondly, helping behavior reaches managers indirectly via word of mouth when others talk about who helped them solve problems. Colleagues often mention helpful people in conversations, especially when they're reporting progress or crediting success. This informal recognition leads to organic visibility, as one interview participant mentioned:

"Being helpful and supportive is one of the best traits someone can show at work. You don't need to socialize or learn any tactics of networking, you can just offer your help and share your knowledge."

Workplace presence leads to visibility by making an employee consistently seen, heard, and engaged in daily activities. Being regularly present—whether in meetings, informal conversations, or team efforts—organizational members become more familiar with the employee and his contributions. Over time, this consistent physical presence makes it easier for others, including managers, to recognize one's value and consider them for opportunities. However, mere visibility in the workplace can be problematic, as it may also draw attention to employees who are underperforming or disengaged, thereby exposing shortcomings that might otherwise go unnoticed. As one interview participant mentioned:

"Naturally I become more familiar with colleagues who are present and available. I also recognize who is not fully occupied and I can approach this employee directly."

4.3. Study 1: Summary and hypotheses

The qualitative examination sheds some light on the multifaceted nature of visibility in the workplace. Based on the qualitative inquiry summarized in Fig. 1, perhaps the foremost conclusion of the study is that visibility behavior in the workplace can be divided into two facets: visibility strategies that are linked to job performance and visibility strategies that are directed toward interpersonal success in the workplace. More precisely, visibility should not be regarded as a single metric but rather as a multi-sided construct containing active elements such as disseminating one's work results, demonstrating a proactive attitude, or connecting to coworkers or managers as well as passive elements such as offering help or merely being present. Following the conventions in qualitative research, power quotes are presented throughout the main text and additional quotes are listed in the Appendix to support our analysis. These observations led us to formulate hypotheses of the relationship between the visibility strategies and career success. In doing so, we extend our own research from Study 1 by drawing on the results from fruitful previous research that has centered around workplace visibility and career success.

Beginning with proactive behavior as our first behavioral visibility strategy, Leclercq-Vandelannoitte (2021) in this context referred to a "political economy of visibility" by which employees stage their own visibility to shape their identity. Also, Gorbatov et al. (2019) coined proactive behavior as the foundation for personal branding in the workplace—the utilization of marketing strategies and tactics to achieve career benefits. In this vein, they found that personal branding based on proactive behavior had a positive and significant indirect effect on career satisfaction via perceived employability (Gorbatov et al., 2019). In line with our qualitative account, literature on careerism echoes that proactive behavior demonstrates organizational commitment through interest and curiosity in the firm's activities (Chiaburu et al., 2013; De Vos et al., 2009; Jain & Sullivan, 2019). Suggesting proposals within or beyond one's task area might also benefit employees' own work by setting up new projects or receiving higher levels of responsibility (De Vos et al., 2009). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1

Proactive behavior is positively related to job performance.

Disseminative capacity is frequently discussed in tandem with absorptive capacity, where it plays a complementary role in facilitating mutual knowledge exchange between firms, particularly in strategic alliances and partnerships (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Lane et al., 2006; Szulanski, 1996). At the individual level, disseminative capacity—the ability to effectively communicate, share, and transfer knowledge to others—enhances employee visibility by sharing project results and facilitating

learning among peers. These employees become visible contributors to team and organizational success, which often leads to greater recognition and career advancement opportunities (Bunderson & Sutcliffe, 2003). Moreover, disseminating knowledge reinforces cognitive processing and learning (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). Research also shows that visibility through knowledge-sharing behaviors strengthens interpersonal trust and collaboration, further amplifying performance outcomes (Leonardi, 2014). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2

Individual disseminative capacity is positively related to job performance.

Previous research shows that employees who engage in firm-internal networking gain access to strategic information that may not be formally available through organizational structures. Moreover, internal networking fosters knowledge exchange and collaboration across departments which can lead to an overall performance increase (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Upward networking, in particular, increases visibility by positioning oneself within influential social networks, enabling contributions to be recognized by key decision-makers (Laud & Johnson, 2012). This visibility, in turn, facilitates access to leadership attention and performance-based rewards, all of which can accelerate career progression (Wolff & Moser, 2009). Thus, we propose that:

Hypothesis 3

Upward networking is positively related to job performance.

Hypothesis 4

Firm-internal networking is positively related to (a) job performance and (b) interpersonal success.

By engaging in knowledge collection—the proactive seeking and gathering of information from others—employees not only acquire valuable task-related insights but also build stronger relational ties that promote trust, reciprocity, and social cohesion. Research by Wang & Noe (2010) highlights that knowledge-seeking behaviors enhance learning and adaptability, directly contributing to individual performance outcomes. Additionally, Cabrera & Cabrera (2005) note that knowledge collection fosters a sense of inclusion and psychological safety, strengthening workplace relationships and collaboration. Cross & Sproull (2004) further demonstrate that individuals who consistently seek knowledge from others are perceived as well-connected—a trait associated with greater informal influence and leadership potential. Along with our qualitative account, these findings suggest that knowledge collection not only improves task effectiveness but also cultivates the interpersonal capital necessary for long-term professional success. Thus, we propose that:

Hypothesis 5

Knowledge collection is positively related to (a) job performance and (b) interpersonal success.

Helping behavior, defined as offering active support to colleagues or stepping in during high-pressure moments, reflects a core dimension of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Helping behavior enhances workplace relationships by fostering trust and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). Podsakoff et al. (2000) and Organ (1988) identify helping behavior as a mechanism that strengthens team dynamics and reduces interpersonal conflict, ultimately leading to improved coordination and group performance. Furthermore, Grant & Gino (2010) find that employees who consistently engage in helping behavior are perceived as both warm and competent—two traits that strongly predict influence, likability, and leadership emergence. These perceptions can improve social visibility within an organization, enhancing access to informal networks and resources that support career advancement. Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 6

Helping behavior is positively related to interpersonal success.

Finally, workplace presence—the physical attendance of an employee in the office—is often assumed to signal commitment and productivity. However, evidence suggests that presence alone has little to no direct relationship with actual job performance or interpersonal success. As highlighted by Allen et al. (2015) and Hampel & Hampel (2023), remote workers can match or even exceed the productivity of on-site employees, challenging assumptions that presence correlates with output. Additionally, research by de Janasz & Forret (2008) and Leonard-Barton (1984) shows that interpersonal success is more strongly influenced by communication quality, emotional intelligence, and collaborative behavior than mere co-location. In some cases, physical workplace presence may even mask underperformance or foster superficial interactions that do not translate into genuine workplace relationships (Hampel & Hampel, 2023). These findings indicate that performance and relational success are driven more by proactive behavior, disseminative capacity, and networking than by physical presence alone. Thus, we suggest that:

Hypothesis 7

The amount of workplace presence will have no relationship with (a) job performance and (b) interpersonal success.

The overall hypothesized model is depicted in Fig. 2. In Study 2, we empirically examine these hypotheses using a sample of working professionals.

5. STUDY 2

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and procedures

The data for Study 2 were collected via the alumni network of a German university of applied sciences. The data collection period spanned from April to July 2024. Invitations for participating in the study were sent to the alumni email addresses of 1,089 alumni. The participants were informed about the study's goal and procedure, eligibility for participation (i.e., work experience of at least two years), the average completion time for the survey of about 15-20 minutes, and compensation for completion of the study (i.e., participation in a draw for five €10 Amazon e-gift cards). After data cleaning, 240 complete responses were obtained, which represents a response rate of 22%. The final 240 participants included 58% females. The average age of participants was 28.54 years (SD = 6.23, range 21–57 years), and the average job tenure was 6.67 years (SD = 2.26 years, range 2–41 years). Twenty-eight percent of the participants were occupied in the service industry (e.g., consulting, finance, healthcare, or research) and 72% were occupied in the manufacturing industry (e.g., automotive, technology, suppliers).

5.1.2. Measures

Items used in the study were, when necessary, adapted to the study's context but not changed in meaning. All items were assessed on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all; 5 = completely agree).

Proactive behavior. Proactive behavior was measured with five items adapted from the Proactive Personality Scale of Crant (1995). Sample items include: "I immediately take the initiative when others don't" and "When opportunities arise to create something, I take advantage of them" (Cronbach's α = .79).

Individual disseminative capacity. We measured individual disseminative capacity with a 4-item scale adapted from Minbaeva & Michailova (2004) that considered the ability and also willingness to communicate and share knowledge efficiently. Sample items were: "I take advantage of opportunities to share the results of my work with others" and "I am very good at explaining even complex topics in an understandable way" (Cronbach's α = .72).

Firm-internal networking. Firm-internal networking was assessed with an adapted 5-item scale from Wolff & Spurk (2020). Sample items were: "I take the initiative and introduce myself to people who could be important to me professionally" and "I find out what colleagues from other departments are working on" (Cronbach's α = .75).

Upward networking. We measured upward networking with a 4-item scale adapted from Wang & Luan (2024). Sample items included: "I take the initiative to ask my manager for advice" and "If the opportunity arises, I also actively approach senior managers" (Cronbach's α = .78).

Knowledge collection. We measured knowledge collection with three items of the knowledge-sharing behavior scale of Hooff & Hendrix (2004). Sample items include: "If I need information, I ask my colleagues immediately" and "If a colleague is good at something, I ask him or her to teach it to me" (Cronbach's α = .70).

Helping behavior. Helping behavior was assessed with a 4-item scale adapted from Van Dyne & LePine (1998). Sample items include: "I perform functions and tasks to support my colleagues" and "I help new employees to find their feet in the team and with their tasks" (Cronbach's α = .77).

Workplace presence. Workplace presence was assessed with a single item taken from the study of onsite and remote work of Hampel & Hampel (2023) asking: "How many days per week on average did you work on site in the office last year?"

Job performance. Job performance was measured with five items adapted from the Subjective Career Success Scale (SCSS) developed by Gattiker & Larwood (1986). We chose the SCSS because it assesses individuals' perceptions of their career success in various forms including the focal dimensions of our study, job performance and interpersonal success in the workplace. Sample items include: "I feel that I am performing well in my job" and "I receive positive feedback on my performance from all sides" (Cronbach's α = .77).

Interpersonal success. Interpersonal success was assessed with three items also adapted from the SCSS of Gattiker & Larwood (1986). Sample items include: "I have a very good relationship with my co-workers" and "I get along well with everyone at work" (r = .75).

Control variables. We also measured two control variables, age and years of work experience, to take into account the possible effects of tenure and experience in the workplace.

5.2. Data Analysis and Results

5.2.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes means, SDs, and intercorrelations of the study variables. The correlational analysis revealed significant positive relationships between several predictor variables and the dependent variables of job performance and interpersonal success.

5.2.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

To examine the measurement properties of the constructs, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted including all latent variables: proactive behavior, individual disseminative capacity, firm-internal networking, helping behavior, knowledge collection, upward networking, performance, and interpersonal success. The latent factors were defined by their respective items, and the observed variable presence was included as a single-item predictor. The structural equation model (SEM) was estimated using the robust maximum likelihood estimator (MLR) to account for potential non-normality, and missing data were handled with full information maximum likelihood (FIML). Model fit was evaluated using Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Results of CFA: Structural Model Fit and Assessment of Common Method Bias

The hypothesized multi-factor model demonstrated acceptable fit: robust CFI = 0.866, robust TLI = 0.848, RMSEA = 0.053 (90% CI: 0.046 – 0.060), SRMR = 0.070. Factor loadings were all significant and in the expected direction, indicating that the items loaded appropriately on their intended latent factors.

To assess the potential impact of common method variance (CMV), a one-factor model including all items and presence as a single factor was estimated. This model fit the data very poorly: robust CFI = 0.520, robust TLI = 0.488, RMSEA = 0.097 (90% CI: 0.091 – 0.103), SRMR = 0.094. A chi-square difference test confirmed that the multi-factor model fit the data significantly better than the one-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2(29) = 565.1$, $p < .001$).

These results indicate that the items are empirically distinct and that common method variance is unlikely to substantially bias the results.

5.2.3. Data Analysis

To investigate the extent to which the predictor variables explain variance in the outcome measures, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Separate regression models were estimated for each outcome variable—job performance and interpersonal success—to determine the relative significance of each predictor.

Table 1: *Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations among Studied Variables (N = 240)*

	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Controls												
1. Work Experience	7.56	6.33										
2. Age	28.30	6.72	.8***									
Predictor Variables												
3. Pro-active Behavior	3.86	.65	.15*	.09								
4. Individual Disseminative Capacity	3.45	.68	.07	.00	.39***							
5. Upward Networking	3.59	.78	-.03	-.03	.36***	.35***						
6. Firm-Internal Networking	3.18	.80	.04	.01	.34***	.41***	.32***					
7. Helping Behavior	4.26	.62	-.04	-.03	.38***	.32***	.32***	.16*				
8. Knowledge Collection	3.99	.74	.04	.02	.27***	.28***	.32***	.25***	.38***			
9. Workplace Presence	3.16	1.46	-.06	-.12	.08	.03	0.06	.21**	.02	-.05		
Outcome Variables												
10. Job Performance	3.72	.73	.00	-.01	.36***	.38***	.51***	.18**	.27***	.25***	.03	
11. Interpersonal Success	4.37	.75	-.12	-.01	.21**	.29***	.29***	.18**	.46***	.28***	-.05	.36***

*p< .05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

5.2.4. Hypothesis testing

Overall regression analyses of visibility behaviors predicting job performance and interpersonal success are presented in Table 2. Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between proactive behavior and job performance. This hypothesis was supported: proactive behavior significantly predicted higher job performance (B = 0.18, SE = .07, t(230) = 2.50, p < .01).

Hypothesis 2 posited that individual disseminative capacity would be positively associated with job performance. This was also supported: disseminative capacity showed a significant positive relationship with job performance (B = 0.21, SE = .07, t(230) = 3.14, p < .01).

Hypothesis 3 proposed that upward networking would predict job performance. This hypothesis was strongly supported. Upward networking demonstrated the strongest effect among all predictors, significantly predicting job performance (B = 0.37, SE = .06, t(230) = 6.40, p < .001).

Hypothesis 4a suggested a positive relationship between firm-internal networking and job performance, while Hypothesis 4b predicted a positive relationship with interpersonal success. Neither hypothesis was supported. Firm-internal networking was not significantly associated with job performance (B = –0.10, SE = .06, t(230) = –1.68, p > .05) nor with interpersonal success (B = 0.04, SE = .06, t(230) = 0.69, p > .05).

Hypotheses 5a and 5b posited that knowledge collection would predict job performance and interpersonal success, respectively. Both hypotheses were not supported. Knowledge collection was unrelated to job performance (B = 0.04, SE = .06, t(230) = 0.64, p > .05) and to interpersonal success (B = 0.08, SE = .06, t(230) = 1.25, p > .05).

Hypothesis 6 proposed that helping behavior would be positively related to interpersonal success. This hypothesis was supported: helping behavior was a strong and significant predictor of interpersonal success (B = 0.42, SE = .08, t(230) = 5.40, p < .001).

Finally, Hypotheses 7a and 7b predicted that workplace presence would not be significantly related to job performance or interpersonal success. These hypotheses were supported. Workplace presence had no significant relationship with job performance (B = 0.01, SE = .03, t(230) = 0.28, p > .05) or interpersonal success (B = –0.03, SE = .03, t(230) = –0.95, p > .05), further underscoring the limited utility of physical presence as a proxy for career outcomes.

Table 2 *Regression Models of Visibility Behaviors on Job Performance and Interpersonal Success (N = 240)*

	Job Performance			Interpersonal Success		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Constant	0.91*	0.41	2.19*	0.93*	0.44	2.11*
Work Experience	-0.01	0.01	-0.51	-0.04**	0.01	-3.38**
Age	0.00	0.01	0.35	0.03**	0.01	2.75**
Pro-active Behavior	0.18**	0.07	2.50**	-0.02	0.08	-0.28
Individual Disseminative Capacity	0.21**	0.07	3.14**	0.14	0.07	1.95
Upward Networking	0.37***	0.06	6.40***	0.10	0.06	1.55
Firm-Internal Networking	-0.1	0.06	-1.68	0.04	0.06	0.69
Helping Behavior	0.03	0.07	0.37	0.42***	0.08	5.40***
Knowledge Collection	0.04	0.06	0.64	0.08	0.06	1.25
Workplace Presence	0.01	0.03	0.28	-0.03	0.03	-0.95
R^2	0.34			0.29		
Adjusted R^2	0.31			0.26		
F (9, 240)	12.96***			10.48***		

Note: *p< .05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

6. General Discussion

This study contributes to a more refined and behaviorally anchored understanding of visibility in the workplace. Building on previous theoretical frameworks and empirical research, we developed and validated a multidimensional taxonomy of visibility behavior strategies, examined their distinct associations with job performance and interpersonal success, and, crucially, demonstrated that visibility is not synonymous with workplace presence. Through a sequential mixed-method design, we added to the literature by empirically disentangling behavioral visibility from spatial visibility, offering a more precise model of how employees are seen, acknowledged, and evaluated in organizational settings.

Consistent with recent scholarship challenging presence-based models of recognition and productivity (Hafermalz, 2021; Hampel & Hampel, 2023; Leonardi & Treem, 2020), we found that workplace presence was not a significant predictor of either job performance or interpersonal success. This finding is particularly salient in the post-pandemic context, where hybrid and remote work models have become normalized (Galanti et al., 2021). Our data underscore the limitations of equating visibility with co-location or availability, and instead point to a shift toward intentional, interactional, and communicative behaviors as the main engines of visibility.

Among the behavioral strategies, upward networking emerged as the most potent predictor of job performance. This result is theoretically aligned with the literature on hierarchical social capital, which posits that employees who cultivate relationships with supervisors and senior leaders gain access to greater resources, advocacy, and performance recognition (Laud & Johnson, 2012; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Upward networking enables visibility at critical evaluative nodes in the organizational structure, where decisions about advancement and compensation are often made (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Interestingly, while upward networking predicted job performance, it did not significantly relate to interpersonal success, suggesting that strategic ties to power may enhance instrumental outcomes but not necessarily relational or peer-based acceptance. This aligns with prior studies noting that instrumental networking can sometimes carry reputational costs or be perceived as self-serving (Chawla et al., 2021; Sparrowe et al., 2001).

Individual disseminative capacity also significantly predicted job performance, reinforcing the central role of knowledge visibility in organizational life. Unlike knowledge sharing, which focuses on the relational act of offering information, disseminative capacity entails an active and strategic effort to make one's contributions visible and intelligible to others. This finding contributes to the growing literature on virtual work (Gorbatov et al., 2019; Leonardi, 2014), particularly in digitally mediated environments where cognitive labor and symbolic performance are harder to observe directly. Employees who possess the skill to communicate the value of their work—tailoring messages to different stakeholders and contextualizing their results—are more likely to be recognized and rewarded. Dissemination thus serves as a critical mechanism of performance signaling, echoing classic theories of impression management (Gardner & Martinko, 1988) and more recent studies on visibility technologies in digital collaboration (Leonardi & Treem, 2020).

Proactive behavior also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with job performance. This result aligns with research on proactive personality and personal initiative (Crant, 2000; De Vos et al., 2009), which has long shown that employees who self-start and anticipate opportunity tend to outperform more passive counterparts. Our findings expand this literature by contextualizing proactive behavior within a visibility framework, suggesting that its impact on performance is mediated, in part, by the attention it garners from evaluators. However, as in the case of upward networking, taking initiative may boost one's productivity and visibility to supervisors, but it does not automatically translate into stronger social bonds or peer reputation. In fact, overly proactive behavior may be interpreted by peers as controlling, competitive, or self-promoting, particularly in collectivist or egalitarian team cultures (Grant et al., 2011).

In contrast to performance-enhancing behaviors, helping behavior stood out as the only visibility strategy significantly related to interpersonal success. This finding is consistent with extensive research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Grant & Gino, 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2000), which has shown that altruistic, supportive actions toward colleagues build trust, reciprocity, and social capital. Helping others contributes to an employee's interpersonal visibility—not just being known, but being known as dependable, generous, and team-oriented. It also aligns with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that positive social behaviors are often reciprocated with affective regard and reputational benefits. However, helping behavior did not significantly influence job performance in our model. This is in line with prior meta-analytic work showing that OCBs, while positively related to performance in some contexts, may not always be recognized in formal evaluations unless explicitly rewarded (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000).

Unexpectedly, firm-internal networking and knowledge collection did not significantly predict either job performance or interpersonal success in the regression models, despite moderate correlations with both outcomes. Several explanations may be considered. First, these behaviors may function as intermediate or enabling mechanisms, rather than directly visible outcomes. For example, firm-internal networking may build long-term social capital or increase access to information, but unless those interactions lead to tangible outputs and are visible to key stakeholders, they may not immediately enhance performance ratings or interpersonal reputation. Similarly, knowledge collection may support individual competence development but does not guarantee that this expertise is visible or appreciated unless strategically disseminated. This is in line with prior work emphasizing the hidden nature of absorptive work and the importance of visibility practices that surface and contextualize individual contributions (Hafermalz, 2021; Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

A further novel contribution of this study lies in the distinction between active and passive visibility, as revealed during our qualitative analysis. While active visibility encompasses intentional behaviors such as disseminating results, engaging in upward networking, or offering visible support to colleagues, passive visibility often refers to being seen without necessarily directing attention to one's contributions—for instance, merely being present in the office or engaging in low-impact interactions. Several interview participants highlighted that even active visibility can be perceived as excessive or performative when overused or misaligned with actual contribution. This introduces a risk of visibility fatigue or reputational backlash, particularly in environments where such behaviors are interpreted as self-serving. These insights resonate with Buchanan & Settles' (2019) work on hypervisibility, which underscores the psychological and social risks of being "too visible." Our findings thus challenge simplistic assumptions that more visibility is inherently beneficial. Rather, visibility must be intentional and contextually appropriate, taking into account both organizational culture and personal identity.

Finally, our findings suggest that visibility behaviors are not equally accessible or effective for all employees, though we did not directly test for demographic moderators. Prior research shows that behaviors like self-promotion, assertiveness, and strategic networking can be differently rewarded—or even penalized—depending on gender, race, or cultural background (Chawla et al., 2021; Rudman, 1998; Wilding, 2024). This calls for a more intersectional lens in future visibility research, especially as organizations strive for equitable career advancement pathways.

6.1. Theoretical implications

Our research adds to the literature in several ways, particularly in the domains of organizational behavior, career development, and visibility in modern work environments. At the core of our contribution is the reconceptualization of workplace visibility as a multidimensional construct, rather than a spatial or merely static phenomenon. While previous research has often conflated visibility with being physically present in the office or with occupying a position of formal authority (Leonardi & Treem, 2020; McDonald et al., 2008), we provide a taxonomy of seven distinct visibility behavior strategies.

Moreover, our study introduces a dual-pathway model of visibility, suggesting that visibility behavior strategies can be broadly grouped into those that enhance performance evaluations and those that foster interpersonal success. This builds on and extends frameworks of career success that distinguish between objective and subjective career outcomes (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986; Shockley et al., 2016), offering a more granular behavioral lens through which to understand how visibility is cultivated and rewarded within organizations. Rather than assuming that visibility uniformly benefits all career outcomes, we show that distinct strategies serve different purposes—e.g., upward networking and disseminative capacity are more tightly linked to formal performance evaluations, while helping behavior enhances social standing.

Furthermore, our findings contribute to impression management theory by identifying visibility as a foundational precondition for impression enactment. Classic impression management frameworks (Gardner & Martinko, 1988) assume that individuals have an audience for their performances, yet our results suggest that gaining visibility—through strategic behaviors such as dissemination and networking—is a prerequisite for any impression to be formed. In this sense, visibility acts as the "stage" on which impression management unfolds, and without it, even effective self-presentation may remain unnoticed. This reframing positions visibility as a central construct in its own right, deserving of independent theoretical and empirical attention.

Also, this research aligns with and extends the emerging "visibility turn" in organizational theory (Hafermalz, 2021; Leonardi & Treem, 2020), which emphasizes how visibility is increasingly mediated through digital, behavioral, and social mechanisms, rather than physical proximity. Our finding that workplace presence has no significant impact on either job performance or interpersonal success challenges lingering assumptions about the centrality of presenteeism and opens new avenues for theorizing asynchronous and distributed visibility in hybrid work arrangements.

Lastly, the study hints at the broader sociopolitical dimensions of visibility, a growing area of interest in critical management studies. As Leclercq-Vandelannoitte (2021) and Buchanan & Settles (2019) argue, visibility is unequally distributed, politically loaded, and experienced differently across social identities. While we did not test these moderators, our findings point to the need for future theoretical integration of intersectionality, identity work, and visibility politics, especially in organizations seeking to balance transparency with psychological safety.

6.2. Practical implications

Our study provides actionable insights for managers, human resource professionals, organizational leaders, and employees navigating visibility in the modern workplace.

First and foremost, our results challenge the assumption that physical presence equates to contribution or commitment. As our results of Study 2 showed, workplace presence was unrelated to job performance and interpersonal success. This finding has implications for performance management, especially in hybrid work contexts. Organizations should shift away from presence-based assessments and instead develop evaluation systems that recognize behavioral indicators of visibility—such as initiative, relational engagement, and the strategic communication of results.

For employees, our results offer a framework for strategically enhancing visibility in a goal-aligned manner. Those seeking to boost performance evaluations should focus on upward networking, proactive engagement, and disseminating their contributions to relevant stakeholders. In contrast, employees aiming to build stronger peer relationships or enhance their social capital may benefit more from relational strategies such as helping behavior and informal collaboration.

Leaders and team managers can also use these insights to foster more equitable visibility environments. Employees differ in their natural inclination or opportunity to engage in visibility-enhancing behaviors. Introverted employees, those in back-office roles, or those from underrepresented backgrounds may face structural or psychological barriers to visibility. Managers should ensure that visibility opportunities—such as access to senior leaders, high-impact assignments, and knowledge-sharing forums—are intentionally distributed rather than emergent.

Human resource departments should consider incorporating visibility coaching or training modules into career development programs. Rather than encouraging generic self-promotion, such programs could teach employees how to articulate the impact of their work, build upward relationships authentically, and support colleagues in ways that enhance both team dynamics and personal visibility. Visibility should not be understood solely as self-oriented but as mutually reinforcing with contribution and collaboration.

Finally, organizations must be cautious of the potential downsides of hypervisibility, particularly in highly political or surveillance-oriented cultures. Encouraging visibility without attention to substance, inclusivity, and well-being risks incentivizing performativity over productivity. Leaders must strike a balance between making good work visible and protecting employees from burnout, overexposure, or reputational harm.

6.3. Limitations and future research directions

Despite the contributions of this study, several limitations should be noted, which may inform directions for future research.

First, our cross-sectional design precludes definitive claims about causality. While the directionality of our hypotheses is grounded in theory and supported by qualitative insights, it remains possible that high-performing or well-liked individuals engage more in visibility behaviors because of their status, rather than visibility driving outcomes. Future studies employing longitudinal or experience-sampling methods could help unpack the temporal dynamics of visibility behavior and its consequences.

Second, our measures of job performance and interpersonal success were self-reported, which introduces the possibility of common method variance and self-serving bias. Although this is common in studies of subjective career success, future research should triangulate these outcomes with supervisor ratings, peer nominations, or objective performance metrics, especially in visibility-focused studies where self-perception may differ from public perception.

Third, the study was conducted in Germany. While the spatial location provides an ideal context for examining visibility in highly structured, hierarchical organizations, the generalizability of our results may be limited in flatter or more collectivist cultures. Given cultural variation in norms around self-promotion, hierarchy, and interpersonal behavior (Buchanan & Settles, 2019; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), cross-cultural replications are warranted.

Fourth, while we proposed and validated a comprehensive set of visibility behaviors, our model is not exhaustive. As digital work environments evolve, new forms of virtual or platform-based visibility—such as internal social media posts, Slack engagement, or knowledge tagging—may become increasingly salient (Leonardi, 2014). Future work should explore how digital visibility behaviors intersect with traditional strategies and how algorithmic systems mediate visibility dynamics in virtual workspaces.

Finally, our study did not investigate how individual differences (e.g., gender, ethnicity, personality, power status) might moderate the effectiveness or consequences of different visibility behaviors. Existing literature suggests that visibility is a socially contingent and politically interpreted construct (Buchanan & Settles, 2019; Chawla et al., 2021). Future research

should adopt an intersectional lens to examine how visibility operates across identity categories and whether visibility behaviors are rewarded, ignored, or penalized differentially.

7. Conclusion

This study offers a revised and empirically validated understanding of visibility in organizational life. By disentangling visibility from physical presence and articulating it as a set of intentional behaviors, we challenge the assumptions about how employees are recognized, evaluated, and socially integrated in the workplace. Our dual-pathway model demonstrates that visibility behaviors serve different functions—some driving performance recognition, others fostering interpersonal success—and that not all visibility is created equal. Employees who proactively disseminate their work, build vertical relationships, and support colleagues are more likely to succeed. In a world increasingly defined by hybrid work and digital collaboration, visibility will remain a contested and consequential construct. This study provides the theoretical and empirical groundwork for a more behaviorally grounded, socially aware, and practically relevant model of visibility—one that can inform future scholarship and organizational practice alike.

Declarations

Ethics approval

The study was reviewed and approved by the local ethics committee of the Business Adminstration Faculty of the IU International University according to the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants provided their online informed consent prior to the survey.

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Ethical approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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Figures

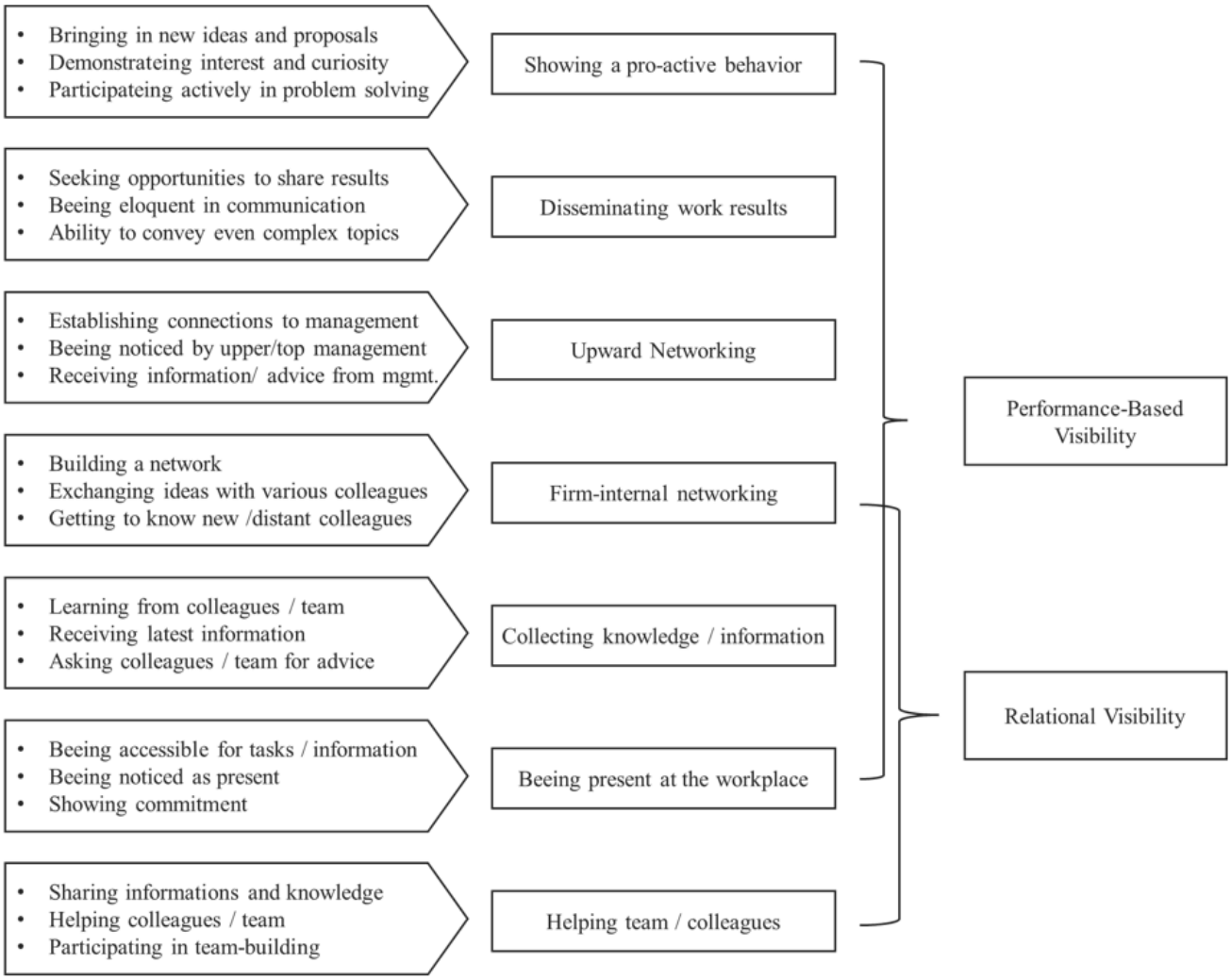


Figure 1

Employee visibility behavior strategies

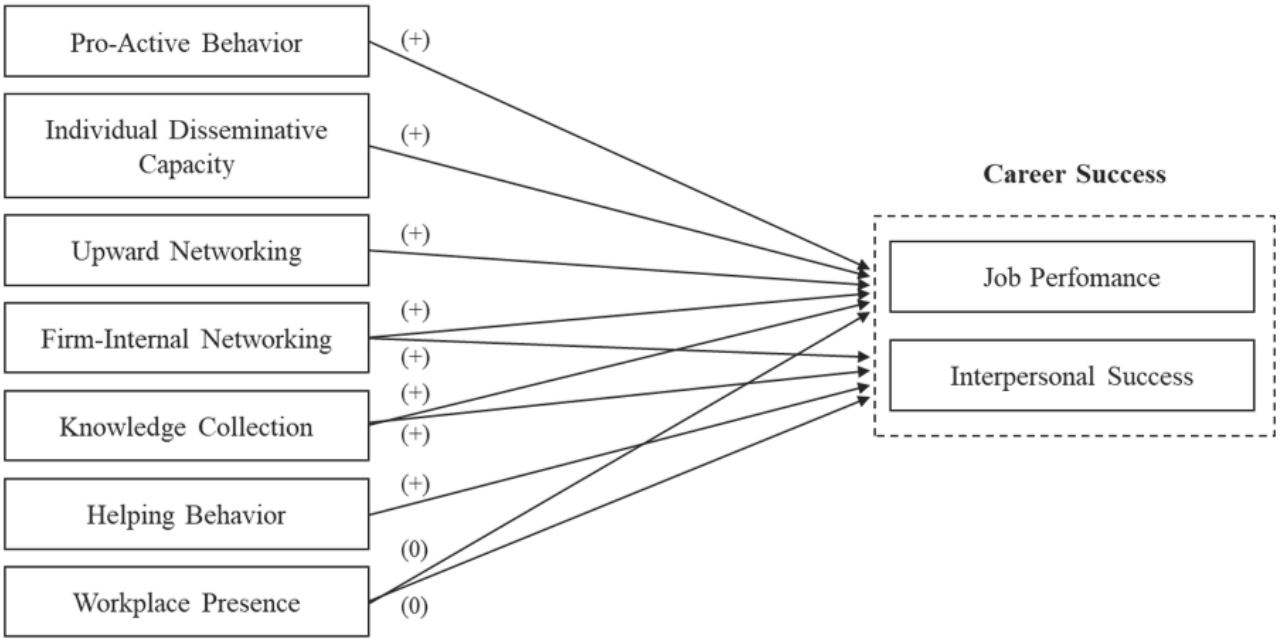


Figure 2

Hypothesized model of the interplay between visibility strategies, job performance, and interpersonal success