



A Critical Examination of the Factors Leading to Organizational Silence and its Influence on Employee Job Attitudes

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Abstract: *To successfully and efficiently attain the purpose, personnel are seen as sources of development, innovation, learning, and progression. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of individuals choose quiet, refraining from expressing their beneficial emotions and concerns over the troubles inside their relationships. This research aims to use existing literature to ascertain the underlying motivations for employee silence and identify the many components that contribute to silence within an organizational context. The primary factors contributing to calmness are often acknowledged as workplace culture, fear and harsh criticism from the administration, lack of trust, and insufficient assistance from management. According to existing research, silence is a behavioral phenomenon that is linked to several work attitudes, including contentment, turnover intention, and organizational citizenship behavior. Workers are more inclined to express their concerns on corporate matters when a company fosters a climate of trust and has effective communication channels.*

Key Words: Fear, Employee, Job Attitudes, Organizational Silence, Trust

Introduction

In contemporary times, businesses are striving to optimize their operational outcomes by harnessing the intellectual capacities of their people resources, hence enhancing efficiency and productivity. Organizations are increasingly emphasizing strategies and practices such as cooperation, democratic decision-making, and promoting freedom of speech within the organizational context to strengthen the organizational culture. In contemporary times, it has been observed that organizations have increasingly transitioned towards becoming primarily knowledge-based entities. Consequently, when people articulate their ideas and exchange their insights, it leads to enhanced organizational performance. Organizations are expected to establish an atmosphere of this kind. However, it is observed that a significant proportion of workers exhibit a preference for maintaining silence.

In the year 2000, Morrison and Milliken (2000) initiated an academic dialogue on the topic of organizational silence. Organizational silence refers to an attitude in which employees choose to withhold their opinions, information, and concerns regarding administrative matters. When a significant number of individuals within an organization opt to remain silent about organizational affairs, this behavior becomes prevalent within the organization (Dan et al., 2009). Silence is often seen as a kind of communication that is closely related to cognition. It may be seen as a significant mode of communication (Acaray, 2015). In the context of their professional life, employees communicate a diverse range of work-related signals to their colleagues, supervisors, managers, and the organizations they are affiliated with. According to Brinsfield and Greenberg (2009), silence has a significance that extends beyond mere unimportance. The absence of sound does not only indicate that a person is refraining from speaking; silence may manifest in both verbal and physical forms. It also encompasses abstaining from writing, being unavailable, maintaining a wrong frame of mind, refraining from opposing, not being listened to, and being disregarded. In the organizational environment, the concept of silence refers to the act of refraining from speaking and several related phenomena, such as censorship, restriction, reduction, trivialization, dismissal, segregation, and other types of devaluation (Dea, 2019). This behavior poses obstacles to

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communication channels and has a detrimental impact on employee engagement. Farrell's conceptual framework of exit-voice-loyalty-neglect (EVLN) delineated the responses of workers to unsatisfactory occurrences by using two distinct dimensions: a constructive-destructive dimension and an active-passive dimension (Roberts, 2004). Within the constructive-active quadrant, voice refers to behaviors that are directed at addressing the current situation, such as engaging in dialogue with a supervisor or senior management over a specific issue.

Loyalty pertains to the behaviors situated inside the constructive-passive quadrant, whereby an employee demonstrates patience while awaiting the resolution of a problem or the handling of a crisis by the business (Gilmour, 2006). The concept of exit pertains to the quadrant characterized by disruptive and aggressive actions when employees choose to address their dissatisfaction by resigning from their current position and seeking other employment opportunities. In the destructive passive quadrant, employees engage in deviant conduct, such as using work hours for personal purposes, exhibiting deliberate lateness, and being absent from work. According to Acaray (2015), employees are seen as internal customers of the firm and are considered to be a very dependable source of data and information. The contribution of individuals in the form of feedback might provide advantageous outcomes for the company. However, it is observed that individuals often refrain from consistently expressing their ideas and thoughts. Upon conducting a comprehensive examination of the existing body of management literature, it has been determined that several analogous concepts are pertaining to silence. These concepts include the employee's voice, issue-selling, and whistle-blowing, which serve to enhance our comprehension of the factors that contribute to individuals' willingness to express their opinions and concerns within the organizational context. The notion that quiet and voice are diametrically opposed is erroneous. According to their suggestion, the distinguishing factor between silence and voice lies not in the act of speaking out itself but rather in the underlying motive of individuals to either withhold or communicate their thoughts, information, and views toward changes in the workplace. According to the study conducted by Burris et al. (2010), a mere 51 percent of workers working in Fortune 100 global corporations reported feeling sufficiently secure to express their opinions on a regular basis. There are two distinct purposes associated with the concept of employee voice. There are two primary functions of voice in an organizational context. The first function is to effect change within the situation, while the second function involves the dissemination of factual information, ideas, or data in order to enhance the overall performance of the company. Workers' use of voice and silence serves as a means of expressing their inclination or reservations towards participating in corporate activities and choices. The concept of employee voice is also linked to contextual performance. This implies that when an employee perceives a sense of psychological safety and is able to express their opinions without fear of negative consequences, their job performance is enhanced. At this juncture, it is incumbent upon management and higher authorities to establish mechanisms and foster an environment conducive to employee expression inside the firm. Simultaneously, workers possess the agency to decide whether they are inclined to use these communication channels or deem it more advantageous to maintain silence. Certain workers may choose to refrain from using any means of communication to break the state of silence, even if they have something they want to convey. In addition, it is essential to comprehend the underlying reasons behind workers' reluctance to use available chances and channels to express their opinions while being aware of the potential benefits for the firm (Vance, 2015).

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to ascertain the primary factors that contribute to employee silence. This research will further provide insights into many manifestations of silence, the effects of silence on various occupational attitudes, and strategies for addressing and mitigating silence.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research will adopt qualitative research methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon of organizational silence and its impact on employee job attitudes.



Research Philosophy

The study will be guided by an interpretive research philosophy. This philosophy acknowledges the importance of individual perspectives and seeks to understand the subjective experiences of employees within organizations.

Data Collection

In this affair, data will be collected through secondary sources, including journal articles, books, Newspaper articles, governmental statements, and media reports.

Literature Review

Silence among workers is often motivated by underlying intentions since they possess pertinent information and data pertaining to corporate matters. According to research, organizational silence may be described as a detrimental occurrence in which individuals refrain from expressing their thoughts, ideas, or information on workplace difficulties, hence impeding progress and growth. According to Acaray (2015), employees may choose to deliberately withhold their views, opinions, and criticisms if they believe that doing so might have adverse effects on both the business and themselves. Employee silence is a component of a broader category of activities that include both vocal and repressive public choices made by employees (Hewlin, 2003). The workers exhibit hesitancy in expressing their concerns or opinions within the organizational context, fearing potential misinterpretation by managerial personnel. However, this does not imply that they refrain from discussing it with each other in the absence of their supervisors or when they are in solitude. Employees often refrain from expressing their thoughts or concerns to their supervisors due to a sense of obligation or compulsion.

Organizational silence is a phenomenon that extends beyond individual conduct and encompasses collective behavior throughout a whole company. Silence may be seen as a prevailing demeanor among personnel inside a business, irrespective of their level of expertise or tenure (Nikmaram et al. 2012). From a behavioral standpoint, voice and quiet are often seen as contrasting concepts. The cursory analysis of voice and silence may suggest that the act of expressing thoughts (voice) is antithetical to the deliberate suppression of ideas (silent) (Linn, 2003). The act of workers remaining silent is often seen as a kind of suppression of their problems and perspectives. The act of leaving an organization, as opposed to voicing concerns, may be seen as a significant manifestation of suppressive conduct. The occurrence of suppressive behavior in the workplace has been shown to be somewhat prevalent.

The Underlying Reasons for Organizational Silence

Upon conducting a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature, it was discovered that eight primary factors motivate workers to maintain silence. The reasons identified in this study include defensive motive, acquiescent motive, pro-social motive, ineffective motive, opportunistic motive, disengagement motive, deviant motive, and diffident motive.

Motive for Acquiescence

Acquiescent silence is described by Pinder and Harlos (2001) as the withholding of information, opinions, or views out of resignation. It might be because of a notion that speaking out would have no effect and will be futile, or it could be owing to a personal inability to affect the issue at hand. It arises when workers are certain that their managers will not respect their viewpoints.

Motive for Defense

Employees with a defensive incentive to keep quiet stop from disclosing knowledge out of fear and for self-protection. Employees who are frightened of being penalized, dismissed from their jobs, or branded as whistle-blowers and troublemakers prefer to shield themselves from the negative consequences of their voice by being unwilling to report organizational difficulties or problems (Alisher, 2015). Employees use quiet as a barrier to protect themselves.

The Motive to help others

An employee may keep quiet and not share his thoughts, ideas, or information in order to help another employee or company. This can happen in two ways. Either the worker stays quiet to get the benefits of connection, or he stays quiet while he thinks to get the benefits of another worker. It's a good thing about silence, as opposed to being quiet because you don't want to upset someone or because you want to protect yourself. The employee won't say anything because he cares more about other people, like his friends than because he's afraid of bad things that could happen to him.

Advantageous Motive

Acaray (2015) says that an employee can hide his opinion or information to help himself by leading others astray. This is called a selfish reason to stay quiet. Employee uses his silence as an "opportunity" to put his own goals ahead of the organization's. Opportunism leads to more casualties that support self-centered secret goals.

Organizational Silence Factors

Due to the wide variety of drivers and causes of organizational silence, there are many viewpoints on what causes it (Schechtman, 2008). Some of these perspectives include (1) Top management's assistance in keeping quiet, (2) The absence of opportunity for communication, (3) The supervisor's encouragement of quiet, (4) Legal authority, and (5) The subordinate's fear of adverse responses.

The backing of top Management for Silence

The success of corporate organizations is greatly influenced by senior management. The organizations' high trust makes the comfort of speaking openly about labor concerns possible. A culture of confidence in the top management reduces feelings of instability. Few firms do not enable workers to discuss what they know or feel; therefore, the attitudes and beliefs of the top administration may considerably contribute to the development of a culture of silence. The degree of quiet in the firm may increase as a result of several top management activities. Two components serve as examples for these activities.

Fear of Negative Feedback among Managers

The upper management could feel intimidated by this knowledge, as well as by the participation of certain people or their jobs, and might be afraid of hearing bad feedback from the subordinates. Due to this, those participants will dispute the information or doubt the veracity of the source, assuming that it may not be accurate or true.

Implicit Beliefs of the Manager

When senior management is unable to understand reality owing to informational gaps or a lack of appreciation for information that is positive for the company rather than bad, it will result in an increase in silence. Employees won't discuss work-related difficulties with upper management as a consequence. Additionally, according to Milliken et al. (2003), management may label people who are contributing to an issue at work as problem creators.

Inadequate Chances for Mutual Understanding

The success of every group depends on its members' ability to effectively share and receive information to make decisions based on their own experiences, perspectives, and insights (Sonmez et al., 2020). The information being disseminated is meant to inspire and motivate people to action. Individuals' emotional and social needs are met as a result. If management is unable to foster an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking out, workers will be forced to keep their mouths shut. They will conclude that their thoughts don't matter. Employees feel more invested in their careers and jobs when they can voice their opinions and participate in shaping the company.

Silence is Encouraged by Management

Employees continue to work with their boss because of his professional qualities, which speaks to his character. An employee's willingness to speak up about their superior's effectiveness at solving problems



or handling other crucial tasks can be correlated with the supervisor's level of influence, which can be determined in two ways. An employee's confidence in approaching a supervisor who can help them resolve challenges at work increases at this time.

Conversely, a subordinate may be hesitant to voice their opinions and suggestions to a superior who commands respect and authority for fear of retaliation (Turner & Pratkanis, 1998). Because of the manager's actions, virtual radio silence is in the office. As a result, workers tend to keep their mouths shut. Not upper management but a supervisor's inclinations and tendency to quiet may impact employees. Thus, when a superior shows concern for his employees and their problems, his subordinates are more likely to look up to him as a role model. Although the supervisor's status and authority may influence whether or not subordinates speak out, several studies have shown that employees are more worried about the negative consequences of speaking up when their boss is powerful than they are about the potential positive outcomes.

Legitimate Power

In officialdom, actions performed by workers are organized inside the organization with the implementation of minimal measures. The status of a person as an official depends on their position or level of authority. After management, there is management is command and control, with authority concentrated at the top and public-sector values driving policy and practice. There is currently no reliable method of providing feedback. There is a breakdown in communication between management and staff because managers see workers' ideas as unimportant.

The Anxiety of a Subordinate to Receive Criticism

Employees are reluctant to discuss problems at work for fear of retaliation, which they believe might cost them their jobs or advancement opportunities. Silence in the workplace is common when workers worry that speaking out may cost them their jobs or social standing.

The effect of Workplace quiet on Employee Attitudes

While "the sound of silence" may seem preferable in certain situations, it has several negative implications on productivity from an organizational standpoint. If workers did not feel comfortable talking to their bosses and supervisors, the company would not get the benefits of their ideas. As a result, it will be more difficult to make sound judgments and improve performance. Silence prevents information from being shared, hinders group creativity, prevents problems from being identified, and prevents or delays the implementation of potential solutions to organizational problems. Silence was formerly thought just to affect the company, but new research shows that it also affects individuals inside the company (Karaca, 2012). When workers don't speak up about problems, it may cause discontent, a lack of concern for safety, and a sense of social irresponsibility.

Organizational Isolation and the Desire to Silence

The possibility that an individual will quit their current position or move to an organizations is known as turnover intention. Employee attitudes like dedication, motivation, and contentment with their jobs are typically correlated with their plans to leave their current position. Employees who are subjected to prolonged silence may eventually consider leaving the company.

Workplace Quietness and Happiness

Being happy in one's job is synonymous with enjoying one's work. Experiencing this good and pleasant emotional state while working is what's meant by "work satisfaction" (Locke, 1976). There are various psychological reactions a person has toward his work; thus, some academics think it's more complicated than this description indicates. There is a strong correlation between an employee's actions and his degree of job satisfaction. It has been shown that dissatisfaction with one's employment is correlated with a lack of communication inside an organization. This suggests that if an employee is left alone at work, his level of contentment with his position tends to fall. According to the study's authors, employees who are vocal

about problems in the workplace report higher levels of job satisfaction than their more passive counterparts.

The Role of Citizenship and Silence in Organizations

"Individual behavior that is discretionary not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" is how Organ characterized organizational citizenship behavior. An employee's loyalty to his or her company goes above and beyond what is required under the terms of their employment contract. Several studies reveal a negative correlation between employee silence and good organizational citizenship behavior. This suggests that a company's silence culture directly correlates to the level of civic behavior shown by its staff.

How to Break the Silence in Your Organization

Several tactics exist for helping a group break the hush. Organizational justice may help break down walls of silence. The application of procedural justice may break silence. It fosters an environment where workers feel comfortable sharing information with management. When an employee feels safe with his superiors, he is more likely to share his thoughts and observations. Employees will be more invested if they trust their leaders (Brower et al. [2017](#)). Employees may be quiet for a variety of reasons, but fear is a common one. If he speaks out, employees worry about repercussions, such as being demoted or fired. There has to be less employment uncertainty and work instability. Those who have the guts to speak out for the sake of the organization should be encouraged, not silenced. The importance of managers and supervisors cannot be overstated. Upper management must provide an environment where all employees may freely and openly share their ideas and knowledge. Employees are less likely to speak out if they believe their boss or supervisor will not take their concerns seriously.

Analysis

The paper provides a thorough examination of the concept of corporate silence and its significant impact on employee work attitudes. The study adeptly elucidates the idea of organizational silence, which refers to the hesitancy shown by workers in voicing their opinions and apprehensions inside the confines of the workplace. The text comprehensively examines the many variables that contribute to this phenomenon of quiet, including elements such as the fear of reprisal, skepticism towards managerial authorities, entrenched hierarchical structures inside organizations, and inadequacies in communication. This in-depth analysis offers a nuanced comprehension of the underlying origins of this silence. One notable aspect of the paper is its comprehensive analysis of the effects of corporate silence on employee work attitudes. The argument put forward in this study effectively posits that the decision of workers to refrain from expressing their opinions or concerns has far-reaching detrimental effects, such as increased levels of job discontent, diminished morale, less organizational commitment, and possibly elevated employee turnover rates. The use of actual data and practical examples enhances the validity of these assertions and highlights the pragmatic importance of addressing organizational silence in order to improve the overall welfare of employees.

Additionally, the paper acknowledges the wider ramifications of organizational silence on the functioning of the company. The act of suppressing communication and impeding the unrestricted exchange of ideas and concerns may impede the processes of invention, creativity, and effective problem-solving. The examination of these outcomes in the study serves as a significant reminder to firms that cultivating transparent communication channels and addressing silence is not only advantageous for workers but also imperative for attaining improved outcomes and enduring success. The paper concludes by offering insightful solutions and suggestions for companies to effectively address the phenomenon of organizational silence. The aforementioned tactics, which include cultivating an environment that encourages open communication, establishing trust between workers and management, and implementing procedures to protect whistle-blowers, provide valuable insights for businesses aiming to overcome silence and improve job attitudes. The article's dedication to enhancing comprehension of organizational silence is evident by its emphasis on the need for more study on the subject, especially in relation to industry-specific and cultural subtleties. The paper is a well-organized and enlightening piece of literature that



addresses a significant concern within the field of organizational behavior. The thorough examination of the many elements that contribute to silence and its effects on individuals and companies highlights the need to address this matter actively. This article provides managers and leaders with practical knowledge and strategies to establish work environments that promote employee well-being and enhance productivity. Consequently, both workers and the businesses they work for may experience significant advantages.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights from the article, it is possible to formulate several significant suggestions and recommendations to tackle and alleviate the repercussions of organizational silence on work attitudes inside a given company.

Firstly, firms need to emphasize fostering a culture that promotes and facilitates open communication. This entails proactively fostering a work atmosphere that encourages individuals to freely articulate their opinions, concerns, and new ideas, devoid of any apprehension about potential negative consequences. Managers and leaders need to exhibit exemplary behavior by actively listening to their workers, actively soliciting their feedback, and effectively conveying the significance of their opinions.

Secondly, the implementation of trust-building efforts is of utmost importance. It is vital for organizations to prioritize the establishment of trust between workers and management. Trust may be fostered inside an organization via several means, such as promoting transparency in decision-making processes, ensuring clear communication of corporate goals, and demonstrating a commitment to resolving employee issues. The visibility and accessibility of leadership to workers are crucial, and the establishment of trust should be seen as a continuous endeavor.

Thirdly, the incorporation of whistle-blower protection procedures has significant importance. Employees need to be assured that they will be safeguarded from any kind of reprisal should they choose to disclose instances of unethical conduct, misconduct, or apprehensions. Effectively stated and rigorously executed whistle-blower rules may contribute to the establishment of a climate of assurance. Moreover, firms need to provide resources for the implementation of leadership training programs. The primary objective of these programs should be to give managers and supervisors the requisite competencies to establish a work climate that is inclusive and conducive to open communication. To enhance their effectiveness, the prioritization of active listening, conflict resolution, and the facilitation of open communication should be emphasized in leadership training programs. Employee surveys have the potential to provide significant insights into the overall state of corporate communication and work attitudes. It is crucial for organizations to regularly administer surveys in order to assess the level of employee happiness, pinpoint areas of concern, and evaluate the efficacy of communication initiatives. The outcomes of these surveys may provide valuable insights to inform focused enhancement actions.

In addition, it is essential for companies to have efficient dispute-resolution methods. Providing training to human resources employees and organizational leaders in the areas of conflict mediation and timely issue resolution may effectively mitigate the escalation of minor problems and the subsequent development of a culture of silence. The prompt settlement of conflicts is of utmost importance in ensuring the preservation of a harmonious and constructive atmosphere within the workplace.

Finally, enterprises need to update their policies and processes regularly. It is crucial to engage in regular reviews and updates of these rules in order to maintain their alignment with the objective of fostering open communication and resolving instances of silence. As the dynamic nature of the organizational environment persists, policies must be regularly updated and flexible to respond to these changes effectively. By implementing these suggestions, firms may establish a work environment that fosters a sense of appreciation, active listening, and support among workers. Consequently, this will result in increased levels of work satisfaction, engagement, and overall organizational achievement.

Conclusions

In light of the evidence presented, it is clear that silence is not synonymous with passivity but rather represents an active state in which an individual finds it extremely difficult to speak up about issues that

are important to him or her and that could have a positive impact on the health of the organization. Employees are less inclined to speak out about controversial topics or anything else in a toxic workplace. One's fear of alienating others and being considered a troublemaker is the most often mentioned reason for staying silent. Refusing to share facts and instead choosing to keep quiet hinders organizational decision-making and productivity. Organizational success and survival depend on open lines of communication. Politics in the workplace might cause people to stop talking to one another. A company's success depends on clear lines of communication, which should be fostered at all levels of management. There is no level on which the phenomenon of silence can be disregarded. Employees are counted on to aid in the company's progress by providing valuable input in the form of ideas, insights, and feedback. There are instances when people keep quiet because they lack confidence or belief in their abilities. A company's ability to think creatively and innovatively is stunted if quiet is the norm rather than the exception.

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