

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Investigating effective factors on the creation of organizational silence

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 11 December 2017

Revised 5 February 2018

Accepted 11 March 2018

Keywords:

Organizational Stagnation

Promotion; Silence

Staff

Tehran Municipality

ABSTRACT

Today, organizations are witnessing a destructive phenomenon called enterprise silence. The refusal of employees to provide their ideas and about organizational issues, ultimately leads to organizational degradation and recession. This research intends to identify the factors that affect silence in organizations in order to come up with the best solutions to resolve this problem. This is an applied research which is performed by using field method through distributing 81 questionnaire at the Office of Welfare, Co-operation and Social Services of Tehran Municipality - Iran. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated 0.78 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data were analyzed using SPSS software and Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Wilcoxon and Spearman correlation tests. The results revealed that at the significant level of 0.05, there is a meaningful difference among the organizational silence dimensions and defensive silence with the hypothesized mean. There is no significant difference in submissive and kindred silence. Respectively, there is a correlation with values of 0.634 and 0.356 between managerial and individual factors with defensive silence. Management, organizational and social factors have been effective in silent subjugation and there is solidarity between the social, organizational and individual factors in altruistic silence. Findings show that there is a considerable defensive silence in the population under investigation and management factors have the greatest impact on its occurrence in the organization.

DOI:10.22034/IJHCUM.2018.02.02

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INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, successful organizations have gained a huge part of their growth and prosperity from their thoughtful and capable human resources. Unfortunately, many other organizations feel that employees' opinions are not worthwhile, which makes them refuse to talk and express their comments and ideas, which leads to the silence of the organization. Therefore, by identifying the factors affecting silence, effective steps can be taken to remove barriers to employee comments and the lack

of extension of this phenomenon in organizations (McClellan *et al.*, 2013; Akbarian, *et al.*, 2015). Although the current literature on organization and management emphasizes the empowerment of employees and the use of their potential and actual capacity, what is observed indicates that employees are not satisfied with the organization's lack of support. Lack of organization support of employees in the field of job demands as well as their growth and prosperity will lead to job frustration and disaffiliation in the organization, which in turn will lead to organizational silence (Derber, 2000). Organizational silence is a new concept in scientific literature

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and therefore not recognized in organizations. According to the experts, it can be concluded that organizational silence means, Failure to comment on staff in the organization for some reason such as fear of punishment, lack of attention and reward for ideas, lack of trust of the director to employees and the explicit Or fear of being compromised by a job position (Panteli and Sockalingam, 2005; Bacon and Blyton, 2005). By identifying organizational silence and researching it, one can take a major step forward in advancing organizational goals and provide the conditions for sharing the ideas, knowledge and experience of employees with their managers) Damghaniyan and Rozban, 2015). Organizational silence can be a serious barrier to innovation and organizational change, continuous improvement, proper feedback, organizational knowledge management, organizational error correction, employee satisfaction, and strong decision-making without employees' perspective, the organization has become stagnant and accustomed to its current practices. Fortad (1994) states that the teachings of how "no" to say submissions by supervisors have turned into art in organizations, and these behaviors lead to silence. As employees do not comment on issues because they feel they will not get any results in relation to supervisors and the organization that encourages such behaviors.

Argyris (1977) argues that in some organizations there are powerful norms and defensive behaviors that often prevent employees from expressing feelings or knowledge.

Ryan and Ostrich (1991), believe that some managers have long live in an environment in which intimidation and silence have become normative, and they are not able to imagine a substitute for this kind of behavior. This limited capacity for organizational silence will strengthen the existing dissatisfaction and strengthen silence norms.

Morrison and Milliken (2003), by adopting a different approach, look at enterprise silence as a collective phenomenon in which employees refuse to provide feedback and comments about potential organizational problems. They believe that silence has become a powerful force in the organization. Pinder and Harlos (2001) describe organizational silence as a conscious, voluntary, purposeful, and active behavior. Organizational silence is an inefficient and costly organizational process that can take many forms,

such as collective silence in meetings, low levels of pragmatism in proposed plans, low levels of collective voice. Van Dyne *et al.*, (2003) defined organizational silence as an organizational behavior in this way: deliberate abstinence from the expression of ideas, information, and ideas related to work. In the Sojaie and *et al* (2011) study, silence defines employees to honest expressions of behavioral, cognitive, and organizational performance evaluations for those who are able to change their position. Experts say that silent defense is deliberate and non-passive, which is used to protect itself from external threats (Brinsfield, 2013; Avery and Quinones, 2002). Perlow (2009) poses that the complex nature of silence occurs when members of the organization avoid speaking about differences to prevent discussions that eventually cause problem.

Henriksen and Dayton (2006) describe organizational silence as a collective phenomenon, which shows very little involvement in responding to problems that the organization faces. According to Slade (2008), employees believe that employees are only focusing on their own personal interests, and that management understands most of all and knows the best, and conflicts of opinion are intrinsically harmful issues for the organization. These issues, although they are managerial beliefs and may not be true to the organization, give rise to malicious feelings like fear, deception and anger in the organization, and ultimately cause silence of employees (Morrison *et al.*, 2003; Schein, 2006).

Organizations don't live in the vacuum. They work in an environment which forms their behavior and structure (Tajpour *et al.*, 2018). Some scholars are of the opinion that when an organization expects its employees to do their job with silence and no critique and criticism, this concern can be a sign of retreat and protest activity of the organization (Brinsfield *et al.*, 2009; Bagheri *et al.*, 2012).

The evolution of organizational silence

The evolution of organizational silence based on the three main waves is summarized in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

According to the content, the reduction of organizational silence among the employees of the municipality of Tehran as a public organization is vital.

The purpose of this study was to investigate and identify the destructive and dangerous effects of organizational silence in the municipality of Tehran-

Iran (In the Welfare, Co-operative and Social Services Office), so that it can be taken by rooting out the effective factors in its occurrence in solving and reducing this problem.

This research was conducted in the municipality of Tehran in 2018.

Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis: There is an organizational silence in Tehran’s municipality.

Sub-assumptions of research: Social determinants affect the incidence of dimensions (defensive, submissive, friendly) in Tehran’s municipality.

- Organizational factors affect the incidence of dimensions (defensive, submissive, friendly) in the municipality of Tehran.
- Management factors affect the incidence of dimensions (defensive, submissive, friendly) in the municipality of Tehran.
- Individual factors affect the incidence of (defensive, submissive, friendly) in the Tehran municipality.

Research questions

The main question of the research: Is there an

organizational silence in Tehran’s municipality?

Research Sub Question

- What is the impact of social factors on dimensions (defensive, submissive, friendly) in the Tehran municipality?
- What is the impact of organizational factors on dimensions (defensive, submissive, friendly) in the Tehran municipality?
- How is the influence of management factors on the appearance of dimensions (defensive, submissive, friendly) in the Tehran municipality?
- How is the impact of individual factors on the dimension of (defensive, submissive, friendly) in Tehran’s municipality?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this research is applied research, and in terms of data collection method, it is descriptive and correlation type that deals with the relationship between two variables.

The statistical population of the study was 102 people. The sample size was 81 randomly selected according to Cochran formula. The tools used are

Table 1. The first wave of evolution of organizational silence (Edwards et al., 2009)

Phrase	Focal focus	Analysis level	Silence and sound in response to:
Organizational change	Voice	Individual	Dissatisfaction
Silence because of loyalty	Silence	Individual	Dissatisfaction
The tendency not to transfer unpleasant news	Silence	Individual	Unpleasant information
Silent silence	Silence	Person / group / organization	Opposition to public opinion / Avoiding loneliness
Procedural justice	Voice	Individual	Fairness in payment

Table 2. The second wave of evolution of organizational silence (Edwards et al., 2009)

Phrase	Focal focus	Analysis level	Silence and sound in response to:
Disclosure	Voice	Individual	Observed Faults
Main organizational opposition	Voice	Individual	Awareness of Moral Misconceptions at Work
Selling problem	Voice	Individual	An attempt to influence the organization's decisions
Complaint	Voice	Individual	Dissatisfaction
Organizational Citizen Behavior – Sound	Voice	Individual	Extra role Improvement
Organizational Citizen Behavior - Focus on Silence	silence	Individual	Friendly type Motives
Social exclusion	silence	Individual / group	for the purpose of Deprivation
Deaf ears syndrome	silence	Individual	Organizational failures in response to employee complaints

Table 3. The Third wave of evolution of organizational silence (Edwards et al., 2009)

Phrase	Focal focus	Analysis level	Silence and sound in response to:
Wide Source Silence in the organization	Silence	organizational	Organizational silence
Based on fear, disinterestedness and pre-social motives	Silence	individual	Employee silence

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questionnaire designed based on the Likert spectrum, and the respondent should identify each of the factors in a completely different Option 7 range (1) to fully agree (7).

In order to assess the validity of the questionnaire, a preliminary test was performed on 30 questionnaires. Then, using the data obtained from this questionnaire, using the SPSS software (version 24), and the confidence coefficient was calculated to be 0.89 by Cronbach's alpha, which is the number indicates that the questionnaire used is reliable or, in other words, is a necessary and acceptable reliability. Using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the coefficient was determined for the questionnaire of 0.78 which indicates the high reliability of the instrument. Meanwhile, in order to examine the reliability of each of the organizational silence dimensions separately, the reliability of the questions has been examined, which is presented in Table 4.

In this research, descriptive and inferential methods have been used to analyze the data of the questionnaires. At the descriptive level, by using characteristics such as abundance, the demographic characteristics of the sample have been analyzed.

At the inferential level, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Wilcoxon's normal tests have been used to test the hypotheses. Since the variables of this research are abnormal, Spearman correlation test is used. The following model is used in this study (Fig. 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been used to check whether the variables are normal or not. The results are presented in Table 5 (With a confidence level of 95%).

Spearman correlation test is used due to the non-normalization of the variables and the results of the test are shown in the table below.

Table 6 shows the Examination of the significance of the existence of silence in the organization based on its components (defensive silence, submissive silence, and altruism silence)

Table 7, shows the investigation of the correlation test between submissive silence variables and silence factors (management, individual, organizational and social factors)

The table above shows that there is no correlation between subordinate silence and individual factors

Table 4. Reliability Table of Questions

Reliability of defensive silence questions		The reliability of submissive silent questions		Reliability of silent questions		Reliability of organizational silence questions	
Cronbach's alpha	Item number	Cronbach's alpha	Item number	Cronbach's alpha	Item number	Cronbach's alpha	Item number
0.807	4	0.72	4	0.805	4	0.78	13

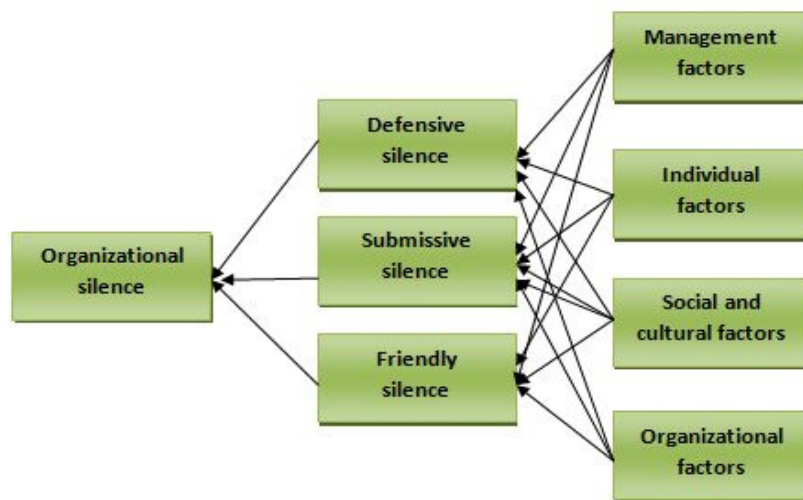


Fig.1. Conceptual model of research

with a value of 0.156 < 0.05 at the 0.05 level, but the managerial, organizational and social factors influence submissive silence. Therefore, in subjugating silence in the municipality of Tehran, managerial, organizational and social factors should be considered.

The correlation test between the defensive silence variables and the factors of silence (management, individual, organizational and social factors) is shown in Table 8.

Table 8, shows that at the level of 0.05 there is no defensive silence and social factors 0.211 > 0.05 and organizational factors are not 0.144 > 0.05,

but managerial and individual factors are affected by defensive silence. In other words, in order to overcome defensive silence in the municipality of Tehran, more attention should be paid to the managerial and individual factors.

Table 9, the shows the correlation test between Friendly silence variable and silence factors; Management, individual, organizational and social.

The findings indicates that there is no significant difference between the level of 0.05 and 0.633 > 0.05 between altruistic silence and communication management factors, but social, individual and organizational factors are related. Friendly silence.

Table 5. Table of Normality of Variables

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro - Wilcox		
	statistic	d.f*	Significance level	statistic	d.f*	Significance level
Q1	0.261	56	0	0.766	56	0
Q2	0.184	56	0	0.88	56	0
Q3	0.201	56	0	0.857	56	0
Q4	0.202	56	0	0.871	56	0
Q5	0.18	56	0	0.915	56	0.001
Q6	0.198	56	0	0.903	56	0
Q7	0.179	56	0	0.944	56	0.011
Q8	0.266	56	0	0.887	56	0
Q9	0.156	56	0.002	0.95	56	0.02
Q10	0.145	56	0.005	0.93	56	0.003
Q11	0.171	56	0	0.929	56	0.003
Q12	0.152	56	0.002	0.938	56	0.006
Q13	0.247	56	0	0.906	56	0

*Degrees of freedom

Table 6. Testing of Significance of Types of Silence in Tehran Municipality

Kind of silence	significance level
Defensive silence	0
Submissive silence	0.857
Friendly silence	0.584

Table 7. The test of the correlation between submissive silence variables and silent factors

		Management factors	Individual factors	Organizational factors	social factors
Submissive silence	p-value	0.004	0.156	0	0
	correlation coefficient	.374*	0.189	.495*	.545*

*Indicates the correlation between variables

Table 8. The test of the correlation between defensive silence variables and silence factors

		Management factors	Individual factors	Organizational factors	social factors
Defensive silence	p-value	0.211	0.006	0	0.144
	correlation coefficient	-0.168	.356*	.634*	0.196

*Indicates the correlation between variables

Table 9. Assumption of correlation between algebraic silence variables and silent factors

		Management factors	Individual factors	Organizational factors	social factors
Friendly	p-value	0.633	0.000	0.000	0.000
	correlation coefficient	0.064	.461*	.801*	.883*

*Indicates the correlation between variables

After examining the organizational silence at the Tehran Municipality Prosecutor’s Office, the findings showed that defensive silence in this office plays a more significant role. Therefore, employees are reluctant to provide ideas and information that is very effective for the organization’s development due to fear and preservation of their position.

On the other hand, in studying the factors affecting the organizational silence (managerial, individual, organizational and social) on types of silence, we concluded that among the various factors of organizational silence, management factors had the greatest effect on creating defensive and submissive silences among the employees of the municipality Tehran.

This means that the behavior and performance of managers and then individual factors play the most role in creating defensive silence among employees. Therefore, the municipality of Tehran should pay more attention in this regard and emphasize the managerial and individual factors of the created organizational silence. To provide an explicit opportunity for employees to contribute more to the organization

The point to be considered in this research is that there is no specific problem in kindergarten silence and social and organizational factors that show the highest level of organizational citizenship behavior in Tehran municipality.

Executive Solutions

- Managers’ familiarity with the basics of organizational psychology
- The use of specialized and committed managers
- Continuous monitoring of the performance of managers
- Creating job security in terms of expressing employees’ opinions and opinion
- The need for managers to follow the job path and career path (in order to get acquainted with the
- Organization’s undergraduate and non-executive body)

- Establishing a system for accountability of managers
- Establishing an appropriate reward system for expressing useful ideas and opinions
- Establishing a system for registering failures and successes of employees in the organization

Research limitations

- No organizational maturity
- Organization Resistance vs. Subject
- Employee’s fear of compromising the interests or job position
- Incomplete number of questionnaires
- Employees’ lack of trust in the organization

CONCLUSION

Organizations today see a destructive phenomenon called organizational silence, which is the refusal of employees to comment on organizational issues that ultimately leads to organizational recession.

This research is aimed at identifying the factors affecting silence in the municipality of Tehran and providing the best solutions to this problem has been done.

This is an applied research. The fieldwork and the questionnaire were used in a sample of 81 people in the Welfare Office using the Cochran formula (102 population).

The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (0.78). Data were analyzed using SPSS software and Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Wilcoxon and Spearman correlation tests.

The results of the research showed that in the level of significance, 0.05 is the defensive silence space in the welfare office, and there is correlation between the managerial and individual factors with defensive silence with values of 0.634 and 0.356, respectively. In other words, people avoid the publication of bad news due to turbulence or negative consequences and the findings indicate that defensive silence is significant in the society under study and management

factors have the greatest impact on its occurrence in the organization. As long as employees own a high emotional intelligence, they can understand and manage their own feelings and other's thoughts to increase organizational innovative activities which affects managers and employee's promotion (Tajpour *et al.*, 2018).

Therefore, the research findings are consistent with expert opinions such as Fortado (1994), Argeris (1977) and Ryan and Ostrich (1991) regarding defensive silence. On the other hand, there is a deliberate and non-reciprocal behavior of employees to maintain themselves in the organization, as expressed by Brinsfield (2013), Avery and Quinones (2002). The beliefs of managers, despite the fact, lead to silence, which has been raised by scholars, such as Slade (2008), Perlow (2009), Henriksen and Dayton (2006), Bagheri *et al.* (2012) and Brinsfield (2013). And also in an article by Tajpour *et al.* (2018) on organizational bullying against enterprise silence, the analysis indicate that there is a negative and significant relationship between Organizational Mobbing behaviors and occupational and organizational attitudes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their deepest thanks for the cooperation of the Directorate General of Welfare in Tehran Municipality.

CONFLICT OF INTREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy have been completely observed by the authors.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Mirzapour, M.; Baoosh, M., (2018). Investigating effective factors on the creation of organizational silence. Int. J. Hum. Capital Urban Manage., 3(2): 89-96.

DOI: 10.22034/IJHCUM.2018.02.02

url: http://www.ijhcum.net/article_32974.html

