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## A THEORETICAL REVIEW ON THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE SILENCE: DISENGAGED BEHAVIOUR OF EMPLOYEES'

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### Abstract

Since employees are the key elements for any organisational success, it has been observed employees practice disengaged behaviour of employees due to several factors. Of all the various reasons such as fear, lack of trust, hesitation, cultural norms, hesitation and many more, employees withhold information, suggestions, ideas, knowledge and prefers being silent which seems to be a burning issue at the workplace due to lack of communication; consequently, leads to occurring of employee silence. The current paper aims to assess the extant literature review on employee silence and its outcomes associated with different variables. Through the lens of systematic review, acquiescent silence, defensive silence` and pro-social silence were found to be the most universalistic dimensions. Silence leads to mostly of negative outcomes such as reduction in organisational commitment, job satisfaction, employee innovative behaviour, job performance and so on. A Platform of communication & redesigning of policies should be developed by the stakeholders to reduce the culture of silence which brings transparency among the organisational hierarchies. Also, the managers should be supportive rather than undermining.

### Keywords

Silence, Employee Silence, Outcomes, Communication, Acquiescent Silence, Defensive Silence, Pro-Social Silence

## Introduction

Employee silence is a negative construct and dangerous for any workplace. However, to achieve organisational objectives transparency of communication is needed for the smooth functioning of an organisation among the hierarchies at all levels of management. Managing personnel are the key elements for an organisational success as human resources are the crucial members for the workplace productivity, organisational performance, organisational effectiveness and organisational growth. Since, employees are intellectual and considered as a source of innovation, creativity, change & development but at times, employees observe various problems or issues at their work which they do not communicate to their respective supervisors, managers or bosses due to several factors (**Beheshtifar et al., 2012; Nikmaram et al., 2012; Zehir & Erdogan, 2011; Cinar et al., 2013**). With the advancement of globalization and modernization, the workplace environment is complex and competitive & employees practically do not indulge in speaking up the matters or about observant issues because of the hesitant behaviour, fear, cultural norms, portraying negative relationship, trust issues and many more (**Karaca, 2013**). Employees feel conveying their matters will lead to negative attitudinal outcomes as well as decline in organisational performance. The silence phenomenon at an individual & organisational level are hazardous; thus (**Briensfield, 2009**) motivates channels of communication to be transparent because an employee's ideas, information, suggestions & feedbacks could be valuable towards their workplace.

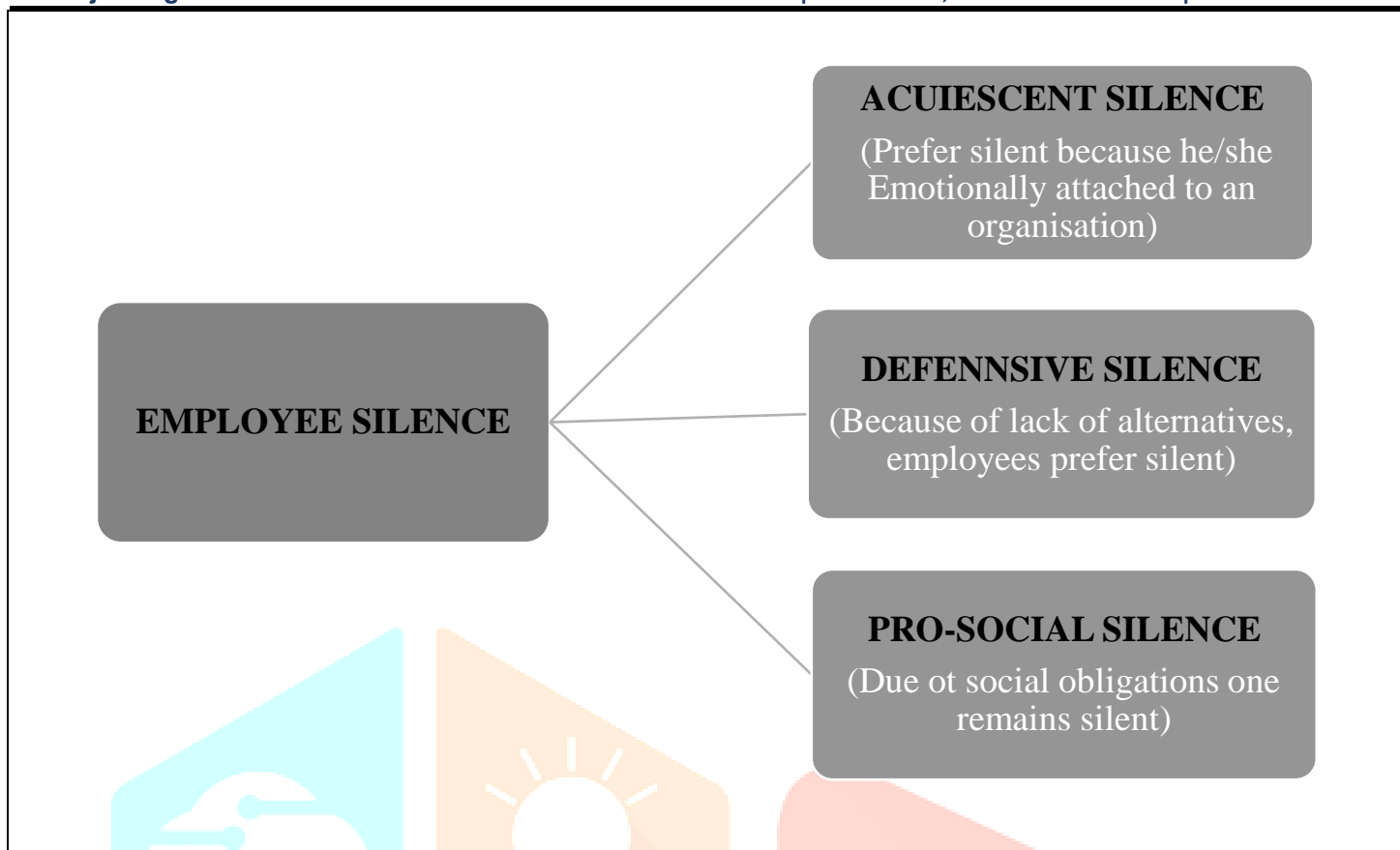
The nature of silence is pervasive and earlier the concept of silence was symbolized as 'loyalty' considering nothing wrong if not voicing up. Also, the theoretical perspective of silence and voice were examined through the lens of justice theory; highlighting significant importance to whistle-blowing and boat-rocking. According to **Pinder and Harlos (2001)**, employee silence signifies the withholding of any genuine expression of one's behaviour, cognition, and affective evaluations of one's organisational circumstances from those who are thought capable of addressing change. Drawn from the perspective of social exchange theory and self-determination theory, several numbers of former literatures supported that the association of employee silence negatively related to organisational commitment, job satisfaction, career satisfaction & destructive organisational outcomes.

## Aim of the Study

The current study examines the theoretical review on employee silence and outcomes of silence behaviour by assessing the relationships and impact of silence on various variables.

## Dimensions of Employee Silence

Numerous authors have figured out the different dimensions of employee silence such as deviant silence, diffident silene, ineffectual silence, fear of retaliation, self-image, internation motivation and many more (**Jain, 2015; Briensfield, 2009**) but academicians such as **Dyne et al. (2003), Morrison and Milliken (2000)**, and **Pinder and Harlos (2001)** had opined the most prominent, universalistic and common dimensions of silence to explain the patterns of occurrence of employee silence.



**Figure 1: Dimensions of Employee Silence**  
Source: The Author

**Literature on Outcomes of Employee Silence & Associated Variables.**

**Table 1: Outcomes of Influence of Employee Silence**

S.No.	Authors	Aim of the Study	Methods	Outcomes
1.	Laeque and Bakhtaqari (2012)	To assess the association between employee silence and organisational commitment.	The study was conducted in the higher educational institutions at Pakistan and 200 responses were collected for the data analysis. Statistical tools like correlation & regression were adopted to investigate the associated variables.	Employee Silence is negatively associated with Organisational Commitment; employee silence increases, commitment of an employee’s towards its workplace decreases.

2.	Gencer et al. (2014)	<p>1. To examine the impact of organisation culture of hotel employees on organisational silence &amp; job performance.</p> <p>2. To check the effect of organisational silence on job performance.</p>	The study was conducted at Turkey and 389 responses were collected from the hotel employees and correlational model survey was used.	It was revealed that there was no significant relationship between organisational silence & job performance whereas dimensions of organisational silence exemplify a very low significant association between variables.
3.	Malik et al. (2020)	To explore the impact of employee silence on job satisfaction & subjective well-being.	Hierarchical multiple regression had been adopted for the study among 275 bank employees in Pakistan.	All dimensions of silence were negatively related to job satisfaction.
4.	Karacaoglu and Kucukkoylu (2015)	To examine the impact of employee silence on organisational cynicism.	203 responses were collected from the workers of finance organisation. Tools such as regression had been used.	There is a positive relationship between employee silence and organisational cynicism.
5.	Chukwudi and Needorn (2021)	To determine the effect of acquiescent silence on collaboration and creativity.	Multiple regression was run to analyse the result and 302 samples were used.	There is a significant and negative relationship between these variables.
6.	Elci et al. (2014)	<p>1.To ascertain the impact of organisational silence on employees' turnover interntion.</p> <p>2.To find out the indirect mechanism of mobbing on the</p>	<p>From 39 different companies, 1794 responses were collected.</p> <p>Coorelation and regression were conducted for the results.</p>	<p>1.There exerts a significant positive impact of organisational silence and mobbing on turnover intention.</p> <p>2.Mobbing acts as a partial mediation between independent &amp; dependent variables.</p>

		association between silence and intention.		
7.	Tang (2018)	To investigate the influence of employee silence and career satisfaction on innovative work behaviour.	The study was conducted in multi-companies of China and the respondents were 78 undergraduates. Pearson correlation and regression were used to assess the outcomes.	1.Employee silence leads to reduction of employee innovative behaviour. 2.Silence is negatively related to the dimensions of career satisfaction.
8.	Srivastava et al. (2019)	To determine the concatenation between employee silence and job burnout through the indirect mechanism of emotional intelligence.	Based on empirical study in India, 286 managers were respondents. Correlation and mediated regression model had been run to know the desired outcomes.	1.There is a negative and significant relationship of silence on burnout. 2.The mediating variable emotional intelligence acts a mediation between associated variables.
9.	Harbalioglu and Buket (2014)	To ascertain the relationship between organisational silence and organisational citizenship behaviour.	128 responses were gathered from the employees and descriptive statistics & correlation was used to figure out the results.	There is a weak and negative association between these variables .
10.	Bulbul (2019)	To find out the influence of employee silence and organisational climate on job stress.	In this study, public sector employees participated in the survey and 342 questionnaires were collected.	1.No significant relationship was found between silence and work stress. 2.No significant relationship were found between silence and organisational climate.

			Pearson correlation & regression analysis were done.	
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## Conclusions

Since culture of silence occurs at workplace, this study would help the managers or stakeholders for developing the culture of speaking up or raising up their voices for concerned matters as silence leads to negative outcomes affecting organisational performance & productivity. Restructuring organisational policies and provision of platform where downward communication is encouraged to practice so employees would share their ideas, knowledge, suggestions & opinions because human resources are considered as a source of change, creativity, innovation & development. Managers should focus on democratic style of management & should be supportive rather than being undermining. Also to break the ice of being silent, employers, managers or supervisors should inculcate the listening ability skills towards their sub-ordinates boosting up the confidence of the employees and one should feel empowered & secure.

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