Acquiescent, Defensive and Prosocial reasons for Employee Silence in a Private Healthcare Organization, Bengaluru

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A B S T R A C T

A R T I C L E   I N F O

Employees are the main pillars of an organization that have individual opinions, ideas and information that helps in workplace and organizational improvement. In modern organizations, employees are not the economic man rather it is essential for them to express emotions, perception, thoughts, experience and attitude regarding their workplace and organization as demanded by the nature of work and its environment. They are the foundation of feedback in dealing with and resolving the complexities. So, with this context the aim of the study was to identify the reasons for employee silence in an organization and impact of the socio-demographic variables on employee silence in a tertiary care hospital. Quantitative data (n=334) were collected from the employees of a tertiary care hospital in Bengaluru, India. Exploratory factor analysis was carried out to find the factors causing employee silence among the employees of the organization and independent sample t-test and One-way ANOVA was performed to find the association between the socio-demographic variables and employee silence. Results from the study have identified four major factors of silence namely; indifference of the management, fear of the management, maintenance of good relationship and prosocial tendency as possible causes of silence. These factors were correlated using Pearson's correlation to find the association between the identified factors and indifference of the management and fear, maintenance of good relationship and prosocial tendency had a strong positive correlation. Further the study showed there is a relationship between age, education level and work experience with employee silence and it differs with different

categories of age, education and years of experience. Since the study is related to healthcare organization more emphasis should be given to the employees as the quality of services delivered would mainly depend on them. The study reveals the need for having a positive interpersonal relationship which gives way for continuous feedback between the management and employees which in turn would lower employee silence in an organization.

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INTRODUCTION

The work environment and the communication pattern within the modern organizations have become more dynamic and complex in proportional to the diverse organizational environment. Thereby, employees are the foundation of feedback in dealing with and resolving the complexities (Deniz et al, 2013). Employees are the main pillars of an organization that have individual opinions, ideas and information that helps in workplace and organizational improvement. In modern organizations, employees are not the economic man rather it is essential for them to express emotions, perception, thoughts, experience and attitude regarding their workplace and organization as demanded by the nature of work and its environment (Sharu P John et al, 2019). Thereby, employees are the foundation of feedback in dealing with and resolving the complexities. Despite the fact, there is a sense of insecurity that hinders them to express their opinion as they deem those remarks and suggestions to change might affect the present balance with the management (Deniz et al, 2013). On the other hand, employees in an organization are hindered to articulate their opinions and feelings in any ways due to organizational management policies (Sharu P John, et al 2019). They tend to not make any comments on the functioning and drawbacks within their organization. Employee suggestions, information

and ideas have a great impact on the performance of the organization and on its survival to an extent. In most cases employee prefer silence as a safe response by withholding their valuable ideas and thoughts (Sharu P John, et al 2019). Employee dedication or commitment has positive as well as negative result on the organization depending on their choice to express their opinion or stay silent according to the situation and commitment (Deniz, et al 2013). Though silence begins with an individual to conceal their opinion or thoughts, it may turn up to become contagious within a team where members may prefer to remain silence when many folks do not speak up. Employee silence and organizational silence are conversely used to refer the same episode (Sharu P John, et al 2019). Employee silence is referred as intentional concealing of ideas, information and opinions that is in association with organizational improvement (Erkutlu, et al 2019). Employees are considered as the key source of feedback to solve any problems regarding work and thus employee silence will obstruct in identifying various solutions along with their pros and cons (Erkutlu, et al 2019). Corruption, reduced commitment towards organization, increased absenteeism and attritions are all the negative sides of employee silence (Erkutlu et al, 2019). Employees who intentionally conceal their ideas and information undergo stress and mental issues and hence identifying the root cause of employee silence is

an essential duty of the management (Erkutlu, et al 2019). Silence is not merely lack of speech; rather it also masks the emotions such as nervousness, anger, guilt, shame, depression and anger. Employee reporting to their immediate higher up is a traditional practice that is valuable in many dimensions as they not just approach with problems, instead as a source of great ideas and suggestions (Sonika, et al 2017).

The concept of employee silence came into to the light of literature after the publication of Morrison & Milliken's work in 2000 on organizational silence. Morrison and Milliken were the first who introduced the term climate of silence. Accordingly, climate of silence is defined as Employees are of a perception that speaking up about problems is very dangerous. When the strict policies exist in an organization there will be silence rather than voice. However, this climate of silence will depend on collective the decision-making capacity of the employees (Morrison, et al 2000).

Indian organizations are undergoing many challenges due to immense transformation in workplace diversity, globalization, technology, business policies and political reformations over a past few years (Sonika, et al 2017) In such a scenario, employees will act as source of competitive advantage to their organization. Hence employee voices play a dominating role in the organization's growth. Unfortunately, employee silence is a barrier for knowledge exchange atmosphere. The employee and the employer are affected by the climate of silence and hence both have to deal in fixing this issue. Establishing good organization culture and boost employee committeemen towards the organization is very essential. Organization's commitment towards employees will get paid in the form of employee commitment towards the organization and aids in combating "silence climate" (Sonika, et al 2017). The organizational decision making in India is strongly influenced

by the cultural believes. Studies conducted have shown that mistreatment and bullying at workplace also is a contributing factor for silence at workplace in Indian organizations (Das & Alisha, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW
Employee Silence
Employee silence can have a negative impact on the organization and will direct towards negligence in the employees. The employee may pay no heed to the organizational policies that will bring down the quality of work when they are not concerned about the work. This situation will pose a negative impact both on employee and employer (Deniz, et al 2013).

Acquiescent Silence
In acquiescent silence employee prefers to remain silent by withholding their ideas, opinions and information as a result of their resignation and with a feeling of disengagement with the organization. Here the feeling of belongingness is lost because of their resignation (Deniz, et al 2013) explains acquiescent silence as disengagement and unwillingness of the employee to make any changes or difference. According to (Erkutlu, et al 2019), acquiescent silence is disengagement of employee that is enthused by resignation. Acquiescent is ignoring the active choices and unwillingness to look for any other option. According to (Das, et al 2020) employee withholds their information, suggestions and ideas on purpose with an opinion that their voice will not make any difference in the organization and is a result of disengaged attitude of the employee. According to Sonika, et al 2017 acquiescent silence is a passive attitude due to holding back the ideas and opinions.

Defensive Silence
Defensive silence is a result of personal fear of the employee to speak (Deniz, et al 2013). Defensive silence is also known as quiescent silence (Das, et al 2020). Concluded that fear is

the major contributing factor for silence. In defensive silence employee weigh the alternatives and makes a sound decision of withholding their ideas, opinions and information as the safest alternative at a given point of time. According to (Das, et al 2020), defensive silence is a self-protection in order to stay away from any future damages. It is a proactive attitude to keep oneself safe from any damages. The employee believes that this silence brings job security when there are no options and the existing job is better (Das, et al 2020).

Prosocial Silence

Prosocial silence is an intentional withholding of the information, ideas and opinions in order to benefit other people of the organization. Prosocial silence is solely due to the concern on others instead of the fear of unconstructive consequences on self. Employee prefers prosocial silence to defend their organization and its employees from troubles and embarrassment (Sonika, et al 2017). Some choose prosocial silence to protect their relationship with their co-workers. Employee prefers silence with an intention to maintain workplace harmony (Das, et al 2020). This form of silence is derived out of an intention to favour others and split the duties. It is out of focus and consideration on others working in the organization (Deniz, et al 2013). In their study conducted within a private hospital in Istanbul, with a sample size of 175 showed that there is negative and considerable association between the defensive silence and organizational commitment. This study proved their alternative hypothesis which that there is a relationship between employee silence and affective commitment (Deniz, et al 2013). This study was conducted in university hospitals in Turkey to test the association between acquiescent silence and leader's behavioural integrity. The study proved that the leader's integrity is unconstructively related to employee silence and is positively related to relational identification. Furthermore, political skill is associated with

positive relationship with relational identification and behavioural integrity (Erkutlu, et al 2019)

This study was carried out with an aim to find out the determinants or factors and the consequences of employee silence. The study showed that hesitation, fear, cultural factors, administrative factors and lack of opportunity to communicate are the determinants and career, satisfaction, organizational commitment, stress and job satisfaction are the consequences of employee silence. The study also explored magnitude of silence in Indian context as self-image, fear of victimization, self-competence and internal motivation. Employee silence has downbeat relation with career satisfaction and silence is positively impacted by stress (Das, et al 2020). The employee's choice to speak or remain in silence will have a significant impact on the people and its organization collectively. Employee silence hinders valuable opinions and suggestions in reaching the organization to solve problems and from innovative ideas. There are many contributing forces that will boost employee silence and hence the leaders or the organization must promote conditions and situations that motivate the voice of employee. Simultaneously the leader must concentrate on breaking the barriers like fear and negative image among their employees (Morrison, 2014).

In controversy to the western study findings, this study showed that there is a positive impact associated with employee silence. The study proved employee silence was contrariwise related to burnouts. India is a country where cultural believes and norms are very high and employees may use silence to portray loyalty and hence employees in India may have less negative impact of silence. This study also showed that emotional intelligence was mediated between silence and burnouts. Hence, taking the context of country and mediating variables into account is very essential while studying about employee silence (Srivastava, et al 2019)

RESEARCH METHOD:

Sample and Data Collection

A total of 334 out of 650 population was drawn for the study through population proportion method where a sample size was estimated based on assumed proportion (we assumed that 80% of the population agreed for remaining silent based on prosocial tendency this proportion was identified in pilot study where 80% of the samples answered strongly agree as the reason for silence based on prosocial tendency) and sample size of 687 was obtained which was then corrected to finite population of 650 and hence the sample size was 334. Stratified random sampling method was used to divide the population into subgroups and samples were chosen randomly from each subgroup. Data collection for this study was done by primary method of data collection through structured questionnaire.

Measurement development

Respondents completed the personal structed questionnaire that included questions regarding socio-demographic details (gender, age, education level, work experience and designation in work place) and Twenty-four items were designed to assess the reasons for employee silence. Employee silence was measured using items developed by Alparslan (2015) with minor word changes tailored to the tertiary care hospital in Bengaluru. Twenty-four items were rated using a five-point Likert scare (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Reliability

Table 1 shows the total number of items and Cronbach's alpha value for scale reliability was obtained for our sample. Reliability from our showed a good level of reliability (a>0.80)

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.831	24

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was processed to bring out meaningful information and derive conclusions which can add up to the existing body of knowledge. This section elucidates the results obtained from the data collection.

Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the respondents were females (61.1%), nearly 80% of the participants were distributed across two age groups namely 26-30 (38.9%) and 31-35 (38.6%), majority of the participants were educated and had a bachelor's degree (64.4%), considering the work experience (45.2%) had 3-5 years of experience and Housekeeping (45.2%) and Nursing staff (35.3%) were the designation of the majority of the study population.

Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted in order to extract factors that would help in explaining the reasons for employee silence in a tertiary care hospital. As suggested by Alparslan (2015), four factors were identified from the analysis. The four factors identified explained 80.32% of the total variance. For the purpose of structure detection KMO test and Bartlett's test were used. The KMO value (.972) indicated that there was an adequate sample to detect the structure. Bartlett's test results indicated that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, $\chi^2(276) = 11295.47$, $p < .01$ reflecting that study variables are related in some way. Since the assumptions were not violated, using the principal axis factoring method and orthogonal rotation (Varimax) factors were extracted.

Pearson correlation

Pearson correlation was used to check whether there is a relationship between various types of factors identified from factor analysis, there was a strong positive correlation between indifference of management vs fear (r=0.957) and maintenance good relationship vs prosocial tendency (r=0.947)

Table 2. Factors used for assessing reasons for employee silence along with KMO value

	1-Indifference of the management	2-Fear of management	3-Maintain a good relationship	4-Pro-social Tendency
I remain silent because I am ignored	.874			
I remain silent because I am afraid of being left alone when I speak out	.855			
I remain silent because I am afraid that managers will make things difficult for me	.854			
I remain silent because I am afraid of being deprived of my rights	.851			
I remain silent because of the possibility to assume more workload	.845			
I remain silent because I do not think that the senior management appreciates me	.845			
I remain silent because I shy away from the strict attitude of the management		.844		
I remain silent because I think that what I say would not make a difference		.842		
I remain silent because I am afraid of being involved in an argument		.839		
I remain silent because I do not want to be seen as a problematic person who creates trouble		.833		
I remain silent because the senior management likes the ones who remain silent and dislikes the ones who speak out		.830		
I remain silent in order not to attract the management's attention		.830		
I remain silent because I am afraid of ending up being wrong although I am right		.829		
I remain silent because I am passive and reserved in nature		.822		
I remain silent because the managers do not spare time to listen to me, they do not take an interest in me		.816		
I remain silent so that I will not be seen as a person complaining about his/her co-workers to the management			.862	
I remain silent due to the respect that one should have for the senior management			.849	
I remain silent because I do not want to disturb the disciplined system that should be in place			.844	
I remain silent because I sometimes find the fault in myself			.838	
I remain silent so that there is no disagreement in my workplace environment				.837
I remain silent so that my co-workers are not criticized				.833
I remain silent because I think that I will be misunderstood				.831
I remain silent so that my relationships with my friends will not be spoilt				.830
I remain silent in my workplace when it is necessary to do so				.824

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

and moderate positive correlation between indifference of the management vs maintenance of good relationship (r=0.614), indifference of management vs prosocial tendency (r=0.597), maintenance of good relationship vs fear (r=0.641), fear vs prosocial tendency (r=0.624)

Independent sample t-test and One-way ANOVA was used to study the effect of socio- demographic details on employee silence. The results in the table shows that out of six independent variables, three are significant (p<0.05) and three are non-significant (p>0.05). That is gender, work experience in current organization and designation in work place had no impact on reasons for employees being silent in an organization whereas age, education level and work experience depicted that they variably change based on different age groups, different education levels and difference in number of years of experience

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study mainly relied on the factors that majorly contributed to employee silence in an organization as identified from the past research literatures. The results indicated that there were four factors that contribute to the majority of reasons for employees being silent in an organization. In conclusion we can say all these four factors namely indifference with the management, fear, maintaining good relationship

and prosocial tendency had an impact on employee voice in an organization which was distributed across various socio-demographic variables. From these results it was concluded that the study had achieved its main objective, which was to study the reasons for employee silence in a tertiary care hospital. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that there were various reasons for which employees remain silent and socio-demographic variables contribute variably on these reasons for remaining silent. The findings of these indicated that gender, work experience and designation in work place had impact on reasons for employees being silent in an organization whereas age, education level and work experience depicted that they variably change based on different age groups, different education levels and different in number of years of experience.

Since healthcare organizations mainly run 80% on employees and 20% on equipment's. They should make all possible efforts to keep their employees work in a secure and stress-free environment as they are the ones who are the main pillars of the organization. Based on these conclusions, the suggestion that can be conveyed is that having an open-door policy and escalation box for employees would help them give their valuable suggestions regarding the problems they are facing or regarding the changes that can be adopted in the processes.

Table 3. Relationship between dependant and independent variables
established through independent sample t-test and One way ANOVA test

Independent variables	Dependent variables		(p values)	
	Indifference with management	Fear	Maintaining good relationship	Prosocial tendency
Gender	0.164	0.444	0.054	0.175
Age	0.195	0.129	0.022	0.003
Education level	0.232	0.109	0.017	0.014
Work experience	0.015	0.045	0.024	0.015
Work experience with current organization	0.158	0.221	0.605	0.644
Designation	0.284	0.245	0.963	0.967

Management can think of reward system in order to appreciate their employees when they give value added suggestions. Training employees on interpersonal and relational skills would help them build good and healthy relationship in organization which would help them come out of their fear and voice out their opinions. For further research they can explore new factors that contribute to employee silence and they can conduct the research in different types of healthcare organizations in order to be able to generalise the research findings.

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