

Review organizational silence factors

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Abstract: Employees are regarded as sources of change, creativity, learning and innovation which are strategic factors to achieve organizational goals, but many of them choose to be silent and not to convey their valuable opinions and concerns about the problems in their organizations. This study aims to survey the factors that create this phenomenon. So with an overview on the literature about the subject has tried to achieve that why employees are silent. The most common factors causing organizational silence are organizational culture, fear and negative feedback by management, lack of trust, bad experiences in the past, fear and characteristic differences that are discussed. And finally the suggestions for overcoming organizational silence has cited.

Key words: Organizational silence; Employees

1. Introduction

Nowadays organizations are knowledge-based organizations. They try to take advantage of the intellectual capital of the organization for improve efficiency. So it is necessary expression of employees' thought and opinions and listening of organizational voice.

More specifically talking, one of the major obstacles to change programs was lack of information, lack of trust and what Morrison and Milliken (2000) defined as "organizational silence" which is the employee's choice to withhold their opinions and concerns about organizational problems and when most members of organizations choose to keep silent about organizational matters, silence becomes a collective behavior, which is referred to as organizational silence (Dan et al., 2009). Indeed, when most of employees prefer to keep silence about organizational matters, silence becomes a collective behavior which is called organizational silence (Henriksen and Dayton, 2006).

Silence is more than nothingness (Brinsfield and Greenberg, 2009). Pinder and Harlos (2001) defined silence as the absence of voice as it has its own form of communication, involving a range of cognitions, emotions or intentions such as objection or endorsement. Silence doesn't only mean people's silence, but also includes not writing, not being present, negative attitude, not being heard and being ignored. Silence within organizations refers to quieting, censorship, suppression, marginalization, trivialization, exclusion, ghettoization and other

forms of discounting (Hazen, 2006) and blocks the communication channels which helps employee motivation (Vakola and Boudaras, 2005)

According to Van Dyne and LePine (1998) employee voice is generally related to contextual Performance (Motowidlo and Scotter, 1994; Scotter and Motowidlo, 1996). It means when there is an organizational voice, employees do their tasks better.

Recent studies indicate that employees' doing what is expected without speaking up any concerns could be a sign of withdrawal or a way of protesting organizational practices (Brinsfield, 2009). From this point of view, silence must be more than a passive acceptance of current situation. Silence could be a kind of message or a kind of talk which is needed to explain more.

2. Research objects

This study aims to survey the factors that create this phenomenon. So with an overview on the literature about the subject has tried to achieve that why employees are silent

2.1. Organizational Silence

The literature on organizational silence is grounded on the recent research by Morrison and Milliken (2000); Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin (2003); and Pinder and Harlos (2001). Early definitions of silence equated it with "loyalty" and the assumption that nothing was wrong if concerns were not being voiced (Bagheri, et al., 2012).

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Performance (Motowidlo and Scotter, 1994; Scotter and Motowidlo, 1996).

Morrison and Milliken's concept of "organizational silence" blocks organizations from hearing their members' voices. Many scholars have conducted research on this subject (Argyris, 1977; Redding, 1985; Ewing, 1977; Nemeth, 1997). It is perplexing that Morrison and Milliken (2000) point out that organizational silence is the common choice made by organization members despite all research extolling the virtues of upward information for organizational health (Rodriguez, 2004; Argyris and Schon, 1978; Deming, 1986; Glauser, 1984).

Pinder and Harlos (2001) recognized that the phenomenon of employee silence might take on different meanings depending on its underlying motives. They distinguished silence in two forms, such as "quiescence" and "acquiescence" silence. In terms of "quiescence" silence represented deliberate omission, while "acquiescence" silence is based on submission (p. 348-349).

Organizational silence is an inefficient process which can waste all organizational efforts and may take various forms, such as collective silence in meetings, low levels of participation in suggestion schemes, low levels of collective voice and so on (Nikmaram, et al., 2012).

Zehir and Erdogan (2011) surveyed in their study the association between organizational silence and leadership behavior in case of ethical leadership. Further, they examined the employee performance through these variables. This examine is based on a survey of 714 people who work for national and multinational companies in Turkey to compare relationship between the factor analysis, reliability, correlations and regressions. Consequently, all hypotheses were supported and positively related.

Tulubas and Celep (2012) examined the effects of justice on faculty members' silence. Their findings indicate that perceived justice has a strong influence on faculty members' trust in supervisor. Their results also showed that faculty members' trust has a stronger influence on their silence compared to perceived justice. Their study showed perceived justice predicts faculty members' silence. Trust in supervisor is found to mediate the effect of perceived justice and perceived procedural justice on faculty members' silence.

3. Why employees are silent

Employees prefer to remain silent due to some organizational factors. Drawing on organizational theorists like Argyris (1977) or Redding (1985), Morrison and Milliken (2000) contend that organizational silence is a product of forces within the organization and forces stemming from top management that systemically reinforce silence. In brief, their model departs from organizational antecedents and arrives at one effect: organizational silence. They believe that managers' fear of negative feedback and the set of implicit beliefs that they hold about their employees give rise to certain structures,

policies and managerial behaviors. These, in turn, aid to the development of a "climate of silence" which is enacted and reinforced by employees' collective sense-making.

Some academics have tried to explain the reasons for organizational silence with internal and external realities of the companies such as administrative, personal and organizational factors (Milliken et al., 2003; Premaux, 2001; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Eroglu et al., 2011).

Richard (2003) bullets the factors that cause the silence in organizations as follows:

- Fear
- Embarrassment
- Narrow conceptions of ethical responsibility
- Implicated friends
- Lack of opportunity for voice
- Lack of organizational political skills.

It seems the most common factor causing organizational silence and intensifies climate of silence in the organization is fear. Fear of Employees and fear of managers; Employees fear of reprimand, punish, missing any rewards or even dismissal and managers fear of negative feedback. For employees there is risk of isolation too. Because of these kind of fears, organizational culture dominants climate of silence in organization. So there was not even an opportunity to voice.

Also Lack of self-confidence of employees can create organizational of silence because they are shy of talking.

Of course sometimes commitment and some moral issues prevent of employees talking. Deniz and et al (2013) studies adds to the body of knowledge about the relationship between the concepts and in the light of related hypothesis, significant and negative relationship between affective commitment and one of employee silence dimension (defensive silence) has been supported by empirical analysis.

Another factor refers to employee relations. Perhaps they fear damage to their relationships. So they are silent

The lack of interpersonal skills might be facing an employee with a negative attitude of manager. Thus Lack of organizational political skills of the managers and the employees will lead to organizational silence. Now, if the employee has had a bad experience gets worse.

So it seems the manager's behavior can be an important component for the employees to have a voice or silence.

4. Way of overcoming to organizational silence

Research indicates that perceived organizational justice could have a role in employee silence (Harlos, 1997; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008). A way to eliminate organizational silence is creating procedural justice climate. Procedural justice creates trust and provides favorable contexts for employees to speak up.

In the organization which participation level is low, would be happen Deconstruction and design a new organizational system based on greater participation of employees.

Theoretically, senior managers with different assumptions ought to be able to design different types of organizational system that, overtime, will be successful in eliciting honest upward communication (Morrison and Milliken, 2000, p.722). They must break silence culture and found a voice climate until employees are encouraged to participation.

The main cause of organizational silence is fear which should be reduced. Job instability increases this fear sense; fear of deportation. Employees' job stability and security must be guaranteed.

Manager's behavior can be an important component for the employees to have a voice or silence. Some personal features of managers are very good for an effective communication that they must enrich these features. For example, they must be able to accept the truth.

Top managers and supervisors have to create workplace where employees will feel safe to express their views and will be encouraged to offer their ideas and suggestions. If employees perceive their managers and most importantly their supervisors either as they are not interested in hearing the truth or they will attribute their causes of speaking up behavior to their wrong source, they will probably choose to remain silent (Vacola and Bouradas, 2005 :453).

5. Conclusions

It is noted employees are strategic factors to achieve organizational goals, but many of them and not to convey their valuable opinions and concerns about the problems in their organizations.

Voice and silence are strategic communicative resources so interrelated and intertwined that they presuppose each other.

Although employees are expected to contribute to the development of organization with their knowledge, ideas, opinions and suggestions, they sometimes prefer to remain silent. Justice can be as a reason. It is noted that Perceived justice, especially procedural justice can be important in employers' decision to speak up about organizational issues.

Employees choose to be silent because of their managers and maybe they fear, fear of reprimand or punishment or even dismissal. So they prefer silent

Of course sometimes they are silent because of they don't have the ability to do any voice or they don't know how express their mean. So the organization isn't able to use them and they aren't as sources of change, creativity, learning and innovation.

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