

Organizational Silence Behaviors Role on Employee Effectiveness

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Abstract

The debate on the role organisational silence behaviours play in employee effectiveness have remained unabated. More so, the education sector in Nigeria is facing challenges due to inadequate experienced talents to handle certain professional issues without much supervision. Therefore the paper examined the effect of organizational silence behaviours on employee effectiveness in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. In light of this five private universities were selected using multi-stage sampling technique and six hundred and ninety-six copies of a validated questionnaire was distributed while six hundred and twenty-nine retrieved after establishing reliability. The results from the multiple regression analysis conducted revealed that organizational silence behaviors have combined positive significant effect on employee effectiveness ($adjusted R^2 = 0.463, F(5,620) = 108.844, p < 0.05$). However, from the individual predictors, top management characteristics, communication opportunity, supervisors' characteristics and official authority had positive and significant effect on employee effectiveness. The paper recommends that management and supervisors should communicate more with their subordinates regularly, get feedback and suggestions to improve employee's effectiveness on the job.

Keywords: organizational silence behaviors role on employee effectiveness

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1. Introduction

Access to information about organizations potentials or issues could strengthen the level of prosperity, transformations and stability, so also when vital information are withheld could cause the opposite. Organisational silence is a behavioral choice that can deteriorate or improve organisational performance. Employee performance is the combined result of effort, ability, and perception of tasks (Platt & Sundry, 2016). This is imperative for organisational outcomes and success. Many factors influence employee performance; and workplace environment factors stands out as the key determinants of performance. It is the key multi character factor intended to attain outcomes and has a major connection with planned objectives of the organisation (Gallavandi & Moradi, 2015). Favourable workplace environment guarantees the wellbeing of employees as well as enables them to exert themselves to their roles with all energy that may translate to higher performance (Boren, 2014).

Organisational silence is associated with limitation of effectiveness of or organisational decision making and change processes. The problem of organisations is that most organisations are sad regarding the very low opinion of employees. In such condition, decision making quality and changes in organisation are reduced. Also, organisational silence avoids organisational development and changes by avoiding negative feedback and the organisation cannot correct the errors. Thus, without negative feedbacks, the errors are increased and as corrective activities are not performed as necessary, organisational silence and its eliminating methods are of great importance in organisational issues and require serious consideration of organization managers (Panahi & Danaeifard, 2010). The fear of management of negative feedbacks from employees is due to endangering the benefits of their situation and perception of employees of tacit beliefs of management about them.

Several research studies have been carried out around the effect of organisational silence behaviours on employee effectiveness, but the results have been inconclusive (Anyango, Ojera & Ochieng 2015; Sabahat, Mehtap & Hatice 2016; Tony, Adrian, Mick & Peter 2011; Xiaoyan, Yating & Hansan-Rasussen 2017). A study by Hosseini and Enayat (2014) found that there is a negative relationship between organisational silence and employees' performance. It means that the more silence, the less employees' performance and converse. Also, Esmailzadeh and Hosseini (2014) found that organisational silence has a meaningful relationship with employees' performance. While findings from a study by Ghanbari and Beheshtirad (2016) postulated that organisational silence has a direct effect on teamwork reduction and organisational performance reduction.

Among the problems caused by organisational silences, employees' inability of producing new ideas and their non-progressiveness are significant. Employees can contribute in organisational development and progress by producing new ideas. Negative consequences stemming from silence both damages the organisation's structure and its employees. Employee silence is dangerous for the organisation because such employees become indifferent to their employer, the quality of work and eventually to their organisation. Employee silence is ignored by administrators/leaders and this result in reckless behaviours of the employees in organisation. These behaviours can damage both the employees and the organisation (Nikmaram, Yamchi, Shojaii, Zahrani, & Alvani, 2012). It can be misleading to consider organisational silence always as a bad situation. According to Dyne and Botero, organisational silence can be beneficial in some cases, these are: decrease of administrative information overload,

reducing interpersonal conflicts and storage of secret information. Despite these, organisational silence is rather regarded as a harmful phenomenon for both the employee and the organisation (Taheri, & Zarei, 2017).

Studies have been carried out around the effect of organisational silence behaviours on employee effectiveness in countries like Pakistan, Iran, Malaysia, Kenya (Anyango, Ojera & Ochieng 2015; Sabahat, Mehtap & Hatice 2016; Tony, Adrian, Mick & Peter 2011; Xiaoyan, Yating & Hansan-Rasussen 2017). Most of these research related it to organisational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour, organisational learning (Fatimah, Salau-ud-Din, Khan, & Hoti, 2015; Nevin & Aral, 2013; Syed & Nadia, 2014). Hence, there is paucity of studies relating to organisational silence and employee performance in Nigeria. According to Abiodun-Oyebanji (2011), the problem of education in Nigeria is not lack of the institutions to perform the role of imparting education to citizens, but the poor service delivery and poor management of the human resources. In other words, poor commitment on the part of, or the failure of people who undertake different tasks in or outside the four-walls of universities is logically there for institutional failure. This is indicated in the study of Agba and Ocheni (2017) that well-managed organizations usually see average workers as the root sources of quality and productivity gains.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee effectiveness

Effectiveness is the capability of producing a desired result or the ability to produce desired output. When something is deemed effective, it means it has an intended or expected outcome, or produces a deep, vivid impression. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2016) state that employee effectiveness does not simply happen by magic. It must be managed and measured to ensure that not only are employees effective in their roles and in meeting the objectives of the organization, but also so that they are engaged and challenged. An effective adaptive performance necessitates employees' ability to efficiently deal with volatile work circumstances (Baard, Rench, & Kozlowski, 2014), for example, technological transformations, changes in one's core job assignment, restructuring of organization and so on. Evolutions of various new occupations as an offshoot of technological innovation need employees to engage in fresh learning and get oneself adaptable with changes in an efficient manner (Obeidat, Mitchell, & Bray, 2016). The employees are also expected to adjust their interpersonal behavior in such changed circumstances to work successfully with a wide range of peers and subordinates.

2.2 Organizational silence:

Organisations are composed of people who gather in order to realize an objective. It is accepted that the most important factor which enables an organisation to be successful is its human resources (Bogossian, 2012). Human factors and behaviors should not be ignored in order to manage an organization in a healthy way. Behaviors exhibited by employees of an organization are of great importance for its operation. These behaviors may create positive or negative effects within organizations, in other words they may either contribute to, or prevent its development (Abubakar, Hamzah, Maher & Alev, 2017). With this regard, sense of modern management gives particular importance to improving knowledge, skill and ability of employees and creating benefits for both organisation and employee from this. New administrative techniques focus on making employees strong, enabling open communication within organisations and adopting the view of employees, making an effort for being competent, identified with the organization and participative (Çakıcı, 2010).

Organisational silence is divided into three types; the positive organisational silence which revolves around decreasing problems triggered by expressing opinion. The positive silence; improves the employee's proficiency and increases self-efficacy. The negative silence indicates apathy and being afraid of solitude also concerning others views against giving opinions. In addition, employees feel concerned about the punishment of the supervisor (Donaghey, Cullinane, & Dundon, 2011). Employees are expected to contribute in organisational development by their knowledge, ideas, opinions and recommendations, sometimes they prefer to keep silent (Dankoski, Bickel, & Gusic, 2014). Karaka (2013) added that when silence is prevalent in an organisation, depression penetrates in physical and social networks of the organisation and competitive advantage will be meaningless for such organisation. However, in many organisations, employees refuse providing their ideas and concerns on organisational problems. This phenomenon is called organisational silence (Nasr- Isfahani & Bahramyan, 2012). In view of this the sub-variables for organisational silence behaviours are briefly discussed.

2.3 Top management characteristics:

The role of top management is instrumental in the success of the business organisations. The availability of a high degree of confidence in the administration reduces concerns of speaking freely about the problems and issues of labor. Climate of confidence in the top management reduces the feelings of uncertainty (Weber & Weber, 2001). The attitudes and values of the top management may contribute greatly to the formation of a climate of silence, as some organizations prohibit employees from saying what they know or feel (Nikolaou, Vakola, & Bourantas, 2011). The top management practices may lead to increased levels of silence within the organisation (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

2.4 Communication opportunity:

Contact is essential to the effectiveness of any organization. It represents the transfer of information verbally or using other means for the purpose of persuasion and influencing the behavior of others. Among the most important functions of the communication process is that it provides individuals with the necessary information for the purpose of decision-making, as it represents an outlet to express feelings, opinions and trends. It is an important means to satisfy social needs of individuals (Robbins, Judge, Millett & Boyle, 2013). The more contact opportunities within the organization, the greater participation and expression of opinion on issues and problems of the work (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001).

2.5 Supervisors' characteristics:

The supervisory relations have a tremendous impact on the performance and career paths of subordinates as well as on rewards from the organisation (Sparrowe & Liden, 2005). The relationship of supervisor's strength and stature to silence or talking can be analyzed in two ways: on the one hand, the subordinate may tend to talk more than keep silent with a strong supervisor, because this subordinate believes that the supervisor has the ability to resolve any problem or issue related to work. Here, subordinate find it useful to talk in the presence of a supervisor who has the powers to solve work problems within the organisation (Morrison & Milliken, 2003). Power and status of the supervisor can increase or decrease the silence of subordinates. It can be concluded that silence could increase in the presence of a powerful supervisor (Edmondson, 2003). The supervisor's behavior creates a microcosm climate of silence at the level of the department where he works, where subordinates do not trust that supervisors will not directly or indirectly punish them because of their talk on their mistakes in the work. Therefore, subordinates tend to silence (Spreitzer, 1996; Sugarman, 2001).

2.6 Official authority:

Official authority is an official or responsible person who, by taking advantage of his/her official authority, exceeds the limits of his/her official authority or fails to execute his/her official duty, and thereby acquires a benefit to himself or to another person, or causes damage to a third party or seriously violates the rights of another. Official authority is the degree by which the activities carried out by employees are formed within the organization, through the adoption of several measures. These procedures are usually written, and associated with the presence of work evidences and records identifying the behavior of employees, the tasks to be achieved and regulations controlling the work progress within the organisation (Moorhead & Criffin, 2004).

2.7 Subordinates perception of feedback:

There are several implications of OS, as silence is of a significant impact on individuals and the organisation (Bogosian, 2012). Silence affects the decision-making process of the organization, in the sense that the quality of the decision depends on the need to have knowledge of the employees' suggestions, and vice versa (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The fear of the reaction may lead employees to believe that talking about work problems might deprive them of their jobs or upgrade to higher positions within the organisation (Milliken, et al, 2003). There are negative impacts of OS. They are poor participation of employees in decision-making because of the lack of the channels or opportunities of communication, reducing dealing with conflict or dispute in an effective manner, and weakness of the employees' capacity to learning and self-development (Bogosian, 2012).

2.8 Empirical review

Owuor (2014) showed that silence had an effect on both the employees and the organisation. On the employees it was found that silence affected their level of commitment, trust, and fear. However, Zehir and Erdogan, 2011; also found that silence cause stress that lead to depersonalization and feelings of low personal accomplishment, as well as negative job attitudes. The study also found that to the organisation, silence would mean the organisation not benefiting from intellectual contribution, problems not identified, and development of a negative organisational culture. It would also be detrimental to organisational learning. However, Hozouri, Yaghmaei and Bordbar (2018) state that organisational silence is associated with limitation of effectiveness of or organisational decision making and change processes. The problem of organisations is that most organisations are sad regarding the very low opinion of employees. In such condition, decision making quality and changes in organisation are reduced. Also, organisational silence avoids organisational development and changes by avoiding negative feedback and the organisation cannot correct the errors.

Interestingly, Zehir and Erdogan (2011) connect that leaders have influence on employees' decisions about speaking up, or choosing to remain silent. Therefore leaders' behaviours play a major role in organisation. In case of leadership style, we believe that ethical leadership put support behind the employees that makes them become more confident to speak up, or more willing to be constructive. Leaders need to demonstrate ethical leadership in their daily behaviours, decisions, and actions in case of being followed. The consequences in this study further strengthen the argument about positive outcomes that ethical leadership results in. Furthermore, Bagheri, Zarei,

and Aeen (2014) discovered that leaders must demonstrate a willingness to understand the complexity of the socio technical systems of which they are a part and be prepared to break the silence. The silence of organisation causes low satisfaction, turnover and is harmful both to employees and organisation. It suggested that communication is the key to an organisation's success, participative management, proposed system and eventually prepare a safe and secure climate to receive the employees idea and suggestions.

Collaborating previous findings, Vakola, and Bouradas, (2011) indicates that supervisors' attitudes to silence, top management attitudes to silence and communication opportunities are associated and predict employees' silence behaviour. These three dimensions are also associated with organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Likewise studies by Sadeghi (2014), Zuhair and Erdogan (2011) stated that they comply with current research findings. Pourakbari, Asgarian and Mahmodi (2016) examines the relationship between organisational silence and organizational performance in organizations. These findings hypothesis that organisational silence is a strong predictor for the performance of employees and managers. So wherever organisational silence is, the high level of organisational performance is reduced and at any time that organisational silence is low, the performance of employees and managers has also increased dramatically. Therefore, managers should create an environment where organisational silence as an important variable to be considered And to encourage collaborative behavior by employees, providing opportunities to create good communication and formal systems to transfer or exchange of information, concerns and ideas to take the necessary action. The aim of this would be reduced and the loss of organisational climate and culture of silence and replace it with a culture of participation and improve organisational performance.

Organisational silence results when people cannot contribute freely on issues of concern about the organisation. Morrison and Milliken (2000) pointed out that many organisations are caught in an apparent paradox in which most employees know the truth about certain issues and problems within the organization yet dare not speak that truth to their superiors. Fundamentally, they believed that organisational silence is an outcome that owes its origin to managers' fear of negative feedback and a set of implicit beliefs often held by managers. Cakici (2008), on studying the reasons for organisational silence, concluded that the most shared reason for choosing to remain silent are administrative and organisational reasons. However, looking at silence as any other form of employee behavior, one can conclude that it can be influenced by factors within and outside the organisation. Externally it can be influenced by the general state of the economy, activities of other organisations, global and technological issues, and even government laws. However, many studies on this topic have emphasized on the causes of silence that are within the organisation and which are within the control of the organisation (Bogosian, 2011; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). These studies have focused on management beliefs and actions, characteristics of organisations, and coworkers, as the major causes of silence.

2.9 Theoretical

In the 1970s, Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann developed a theory that suggested that the expression and formation of public opinion (Glynn, 1997) results from people's perception of the climate of opinion (Yun & Park, 2011). Individuals use a 'quasistatistical sense' to determine whether their opinions are popular or unpopular (Hayes, 2007). If they perceive that they share their opinions with the majority, they may be willing to speak out. Alternatively, if they perceive their opinions to be those of the minority, they will keep silent or conform to the majority view (Liu & Fahmy, 2011). Mitchell, Cropanzana, and Quisenberry (2012) revealed that spirals of silence within groups can restrict the open and honest discussion that is essential to organizational improvement. Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence emphasizes the horizontal pressures that the threat of isolation and corresponding fear of isolation exert to keep people from being open and honest about their opinions. The fear and threat of isolation are particularly powerful for members of invisible minorities such as gay and lesbian employees. We propose a second, vertical spiral of silence may develop through processes at a more micro level within the workgroup and organization. This second spiral begins with the inability to fully express one's personal identity within the workgroup because of a negative climate of opinion towards a particular aspect of one's identity. This may be especially true for invisible sources of diversity such as sexual orientation. Revealing a potentially disruptive identity might impair social cohesion: concealing it, however, can inhibit social exchange and task exchange and reduce self-efficacy, leading to organizational silence. However, an alternate virtuous spiral can result in which individuals will feel empowered to express organizational voice.

3. Methodological Review

The cross-sectional research design was adopted. The reason for the adoption of this design is in line with the studies of several scholars, such as Wageeh (2016); Jaweria, and Jaleel (2016); Katsuhiko (2017); and Edoardo (2017). Nafei (2016) in their studies on organisational silence: Its destroying role of organisational citizenship behavior. Also Zehir (2011) in the study the association between organisational silence and ethical leadership through employee performance. Taheri and Zarei (2017) in the study of the relationship between organisational silence, job exhaustion and job performance among Farshousing bank staff. The study was conducted in Ogun

State because the State has the highest concentration of private universities in Nigeria.

Five private universities were used based on year of establishment (1999-2009) and academic excellence. The selected private universities include Babcock University, Bells University, Covenant University, Crawford University, and Crescent University. The target population consisted of regular faculty and staff. A sample size of 696 was obtained using the formula recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Items used in the questionnaire were adopted and adapted based on conceptual review. The pilot test was conducted using two private universities in Ogun State namely, Christopher University and Mountaintop University. The content validity was used to determine how well the research instrument measures the intended items. While the construct validity was determined by reviewing literatures and obtaining validated research instruments. The reliability of the research instrument was subjected to internal consistency method. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficient and Cronbach coefficient of 0.7 and above was considered adequate for an adapted questionnaire; as results ranged from 0.704 to 0.948 (Livingston, 2018).

Therefore, the multiple regression equation was established based on the proxy of organisational silence behaviours. Thus the model was formulated as:

$$Y = f(X)$$

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable (Employee Effectiveness)
 X = Independent Variable (Organizational Silence)

Where:

x₁= Top Management Characteristics (TMC)
 x₂= Communication Opportunity (CO)
 x₃= Supervisors Characteristics (SSC)
 x₄= Official Authority (OA)
 x₅= Subordinates Perception of Feedback (SPF)

The functional relationship of the model is presented as:

$$EF = \beta_0 + \beta_1TMC + \beta_2CO + \beta_3SC + \beta_4OA + \beta_5SPF + \epsilon_i$$

4. Results and Discussions

The inferential statistics was applied to determine whether organizational silence behaviours have no significant effect on employee effectiveness in selected private universities in Ogun State.

Multiple regression result for organizational silence behaviors role and employee effectiveness

Model	B	T	Sig	F(df)	R ²	Adj R ²	F(Sig).
Constant	4.588	5.660	.000	F(5,620)	0.467	0.463	0.000
TMC	.199	4.779	.000				
CO	.226	5.563	.000				
SC	.156	3.801	.000				
OA	.146	3.782	.000				
SPF	.041	1.359	.174				

Dependent Variable: Employee Effectiveness

4.1 Interpretation

Table 1 reveals the outcome of the multiple regression on the effect of organizational silence dimension (top management characteristics, communication opportunity, supervisor characteristics, official authority and subordinate's perception of feedback) on employee effectiveness of selected private university in Ogun State. The table shows that organizational silence dimension when combined to determine their effect on employee effectiveness of selected private university in Ogun State produced a coefficient of multiple correlation, $r = 0.684$ and an adjusted $R^2 = 0.463$ at $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, indicates that percentage of variation in employee effectiveness jointly explained by the explanatory variables is 46.3% and other factors that are not studied contributes a balance of 53.7%.

The table further reveals that the coefficients of the regression model designed to investigate the effect of organizational silence dimension on employee effectiveness are provided. From the results, top management characteristics, communication opportunity, supervisor characteristics, official authority and subordinate's perception of feedback has no significant effect on employee effectiveness of selected private university in Ogun State. The results reveals the unstandardized coefficients of top management characteristics [$\beta = 0.199$, $p = 0.000$], communication opportunity [$\beta = 0.226$, $p = 0.000$], supervisor characteristic [$\beta = 0.156$, $p = 0.004$], official authority [$\beta = 0.146$, $p = 0.000$], and subordinates perception of feedback [$\beta = 0.041$, $p = 0.174$] are all statistically insignificant.

This therefore indicates that a percentage increase in top management characteristics will have a 19.9% increase in employee effectiveness of selected private university, a percentage increase in communication

opportunity will have an 22.6% increase in employee effectiveness of selected private university, a percentage increase in supervisor characteristics will have an 15.6% increase in employee effectiveness of selected private university, a percentage increase in official authority will have a 14.6% increase in employee effectiveness selected private university, while a percentage increase in subordinates perception of feedback will have a 4.1% increase in employee effectiveness of selected private university. The final regression model for thus becomes:

$$EE = 4.588 + 0.199(TMC) + 0.226(CP) + 0.156(SC) + 0.146(OA).....eq1$$

Where:

- EE = Employee Effectiveness
- TMC = Top Management Characteristic
- CO= Communication Opportunity
- SC = Supervisor Characteristic
- OA = Official Authority

Based on the regression equation above, taking into account all organizational silence dimension (top management characteristics, communication opportunity, supervisor characteristics, and official authority) have insignificant contributions to employee effectiveness while subordinates perception of feedback does not. The *a priori* expectation was that the variables of organizational silence dimension will have a significant effect on employee effectiveness. Thus, the null hypothesis should be accepted if $\beta_1 - \beta_5 \neq 0$ and $p \leq 0.05$ H_{01} otherwise it has to be rejected. Based on the results in the table, the coefficients of the measures of organizational silence dimension are not equal to zero and their p value of subordinates perception of feedback is found to be higher than 0.05. Since we have more of the predictors contributing significantly to employee effectiveness, we have to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that organizational silence dimensions have a significant effect on employee effectiveness of the selected private university in Ogun State.

4.2 Discussion of findings

It was discovered that organizational silence variables have significant effect on employee effectiveness. To align this finding to existing knowledge, Owuor (2014) showed that silence had an effect on both the employees and the organization. On the employees it was found that silence affected their level of commitment, trust, and fear. However, Zehir & Erdogan, 2011; also found that silence cause stress that lead to depersonalization and feelings of low personal accomplishment, as well as negative job attitudes. The study also found that to the organization, silence would mean the organization not benefiting from intellectual contribution, problems not identified, and development of a negative organizational culture. It would also be detrimental to organizational learning.

However, Hozouri, Yaghmaei and Bordbar (2018) state that organizational silence is associated with limitation of effectiveness of or organizational decision making and change processes. The problem of organizations is that most organizations are sad regarding the very low opinion of employees. In such condition, decision making quality and changes in organization are reduced. Also, organizational silence avoids organizational development and changes by avoiding negative feedback and the organization cannot correct the errors.

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Furthermore, Bagheri, Zarei, and Aeen (2014) discovered that leaders must demonstrate a willingness to understand the complexity of the socio technical systems of which they are a part and be prepared to break the silence. The silence of organization causes low satisfaction, turnover and is harmful both to employees and organization. It suggested that communication is the key to an organization's success, participative management, proposed system and eventually prepare a safe and secure climate to receive the employee's idea and suggestions.

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employees, providing opportunities to create good communication and formal systems to transfer or exchange of information, concerns and ideas to take the necessary action. The aim of this would be reduced and the loss of organizational climate and culture of silence and replace it with a culture of participation and improve organizational performance.

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5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Increasing organizational effectiveness should be the central consideration of any organization, therefore managers, should be watchful for the silence of employees. The results of this study suggest that managers should keep in view the importance of voice of employees. They should develop the employee evaluation procedures in such a way that motivate the employees to break their silence. The employees should be assured of fair procedures within their organizations. Managers can plan, organize, direct and coordinate activities, control, ability and willingness to assume responsibility, accountability, efficient use of staff in ways to reduce climate of silence and enhance their performance. The need for increased attention on the part of senior management to support the exchange of information and ideas with employees in the organization process because its significant correlation effect is obvious to silence workers. Promote open-door policy by opening channels of communication to the subordinates to communicate their ideas to their heads, either through personal meetings, suggestion funds or regular meetings, as well as facilitating communication with higher heads in case direct head does not respond.

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