

## OVERCOMING EMPLOYEE SILENCE TO ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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### Abstract

*One of the fast spread issue in the organization is the employee silence, yet few empirical studies are conducted to identify its nature and main components. The purpose of this paper was to investigate the factors leading to silence climate in the firm and discovering the effects of these factors on organizational commitment. In the stressful situations, when business is in need of innovative ideas and creativity, employees want to remain silent leading to many negative consequences. In such a situation, what matters is the participative leadership style that encourages the employees to raise their voices. This paper also highlights the positive impact of effective communication and decentralized decision making process along with conducive norms and organizational culture on employee silence behavior. Thus the overall theme of this study was to present a framework exploring how employee silence effects the organizational commitment through the leadership style, communication process and organizational culture. A cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of 200 employees, taken from the NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) sector, in Peshawar, Pakistan, in which three aspects of employee silence, namely leadership style, communication process and organizational culture, were constructed and measured in order to examine their effects on organizational commitment. Regression analysis will be used to test the hypotheses. Although the concept of employee silence is projected in organizations, less empirical work is noted in the literature focusing on exploring, analyzing and handling it. Review of literature has proved a negative impact of silence climate on organizations' performance, innovation and creativity. This exploratory research work was intended to investigate and measure factors contributing to employee silence such as leadership style, communication process and organizational culture and their impact on organizational commitment.*

**Keywords** – Employee silence, leadership style, communication process, organizational culture, organizational commitment.

### INTRODUCTION

To cope with the customers demand and quality assurance issues in the competitive market, firms have raised their expectations from their employees in term of taking initiative, bringing creativity and innovation, bearing the responsibility and speaking up for the betterment of the firm. (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). For the survival, organizations are in dare need of workforce who can respond to the challenges quickly and wisely, can raise their voice against issues as well as can provide information and who can stand up not only for their own welfare but for the whole team. On the other hand they are employees who decide when to speak and when to remain silent. They use silence or voice approach to show their willingness or unwillingness to participate in organizational decisions making process (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). As mentioned by

many researchers (Van Dyne & LePine, 2003, Whiting, Podsakoff & Pierce, 2008), voice and silence are connected to organizational citizenship behaviors, thus leading to influencing organizational commitment. Finally it is said that voice have a positive effects, while silence, have the negative effects on the firm performance.

According to Cuellar, Keil & Johnson, (2006), employees uses silence approach as a self defense mechanism, which is called Deaf Effect or the Mum Effect (Smith, Keil & Depledge, 2001). Thus it is sarcastic that in critical economic situations, when innovation and creative ideas are required, employees refuse to share their views, resulting in decreased organizational performance. Moreover, Schlenker & Weigold, (1989); Van Dyne et al., (2003), describes defensive silence as “intentional and proactive behavior that is intended to protect the self from external threats”. On the other hand, sometimes employees prefer to raise their voice. Meyerson, (2001), in his research work quoted Cynthia Cooper, an employee at WorldCom and Coleen Rowley from the FBI, who were awarded the title of 2002 People of the Year, by Time Magazine for their bravery to raise voice in front of their top management regarding problems they noticed in their organizations, hence it depends when employees choose to speak and to remain silent.

Perlow and Williams (2003) declared in their research work that the phenomenon of employee silence is one of the critical organizational concerns yet little empirical work is done in the field (Milliken et al., 2003; Van Dyne et al., 2003). The work of Morrison and Milliken (2000) to introduce the concept is notable. They identified the integral organizational elements leading to employee silence behavior. These elements, such as decision-making processes, management processes, and culture, demonstrate the silence behavior of each worker as to how they perceive it. For the purpose of this study, the organizational characteristics leading to employee silence were organizational culture, communication process, leadership style and organizational commitment.

To ensure that decision makers are informed and consider all sides to an issue while change management process, employees are motivated to speak and be a part of open and honest communication process (Nemeth, 1997). This open communication highlights the problems and difficulties faced by the workforce. A part from all this literature citation, employees complaint that their organizations do not encourage free flow of information thus result in silent climate in the firm (Beer and Noria, 2000). Moreover, one of the main hurdle faced by the companies towards organizational development was cited to be lack of formal upward feedback mechanism and trust, as well as centralized decision making process, due to which employees choice is to remain silent, that is as discussed by Morrison and Milliken (2000) employee’s choice to “withhold their opinions and concerns about organisational problems”. For the purpose of this study communication and input by the employees is referred to:

- (1) Employee’s communication with their co-workers and to the top management of their complaints in a work-related issues; and
- (2) Employees participation in the decision-making processes of the firm (McCabe and Lewin; 1992).

For the sake of this paper employees refers to all organizational members regardless of their position (management, subordinate), whereas while talking about leadership, it refers to anyone in the firm having authority to take decision, regardless of their position.

Just like previous researches, this paper also focuses on organizational culture and prevailing norms as a source of employee silence. Followed by the concept of Van Dyne *et al.* (2003), this paper highlights procedural injustice as one of the factor of silent behavior as well as negative consequences by the top management associated with raising the voice. Senge (1999) continues that in most of the organizations environment of fear and silence are the values to be followed. This restriction towards openness consequent in keeping silent, resulting in dissatisfaction and creates „„silent““ culture for the upcoming workforce. Moreover, accepting the argument of Morrison and Milliken (2000) this paper states untrustworthiness and lack of loyalty as the negative consequences attached to raising voice, perceived by the top management. However, Opper (2002), mentioned the case of Enron in his research stating that employees at Enron was adopt to the culture of remaining silent, although knowing the facts about the drop down of the business finances, as they were afraid to raise their voice to the top management due to the negative consequences. The justice literature has linked voice to the presence of due process procedures that enhance justice judgments and facilitate employee participation in decision-making (e.g., Bies and Shapiro, 1988).

Vakola and Bouradas (2005), declared that the leader is the one who can fight against the silent culture and create a culture of openness. He further stated that leader’s attitudes toward silence is the strongest forecaster of silence climate followed by top executive attitudes and organizational communication process. But in times of depression and hard times leader’s ability to sense employee voice decreases, consequently employees starts feeling hesitation to share information and their opinions, thus resulting in dissatisfaction (Pinder & Harlos 2001, Peirce, Smolinski & Rosen 1998). In contrast some other researchers (Kassing, 1997; Redding, 1985; Seeger and Ulmer, 2003) presents a different view and mentioned that leaders are mostly ready to hear about the problems faced by the employees but employees on the other hand are afraid to speak due to expecting negative reaction from the top management (Nemeth, 1985; Sprague and Ruud, 1988). According to Wilson and Harrison, (2001), the reason behind employees silent behavior is they doesn’t want to contaminate their image in the eyes of higher authorities. Many worker fear retaliation that could be in form of harassment, lower performance appraisal ratings and decreased promotion possibilities (Feuille and Delaney, 1993) and also being fired from the job (Westin et al., 1981). This paper focuses on the leader’s positive attitude towards his team members, to eliminated the climate of silence.

On the basis of the above arguments this exploratory study aims to identify the influence of organizational factors, such as organizational culture, leadership style and communication process, leading to the employee silence and consequently its impact on the organizational commitment. Past researches have proved a negative relationship between silence behavior and organizational commitment. Therefore it is important for the organization to recognize when employees are contributing voice or silence to the

Organization's dialogue. To investigate this cause and effects relationship researcher planned to survey 200 employees in any organization.

Thus researcher tries to find answers for the following questions:

**Research Question 1.** How does leadership style contributes to employee silence.

**Research Question 2.** How does organizational communication process contributes to employee silence.

**Research Question 3.** How organizational culture does contributes to employee silence.

**Research Question 4.** How does employee silence effects organizational commitment?

The rest of the manuscript is arranged as follows. In the subsequent section, the current literature on the employee silence, organizational characteristics influencing employee silence behavior such as communication process, leadership style and organizational culture and organizational commitment is reviewed, pursued by a concise discussion about the methodology used. After that, the theoretical framework of employee silence and its impact on organizational commitment is presented, followed by some statistical analysis of the elements involved along with the interpretation of data and suggestions about how organizations can deal with the issue of employee silence finally leading towards achievement of organizational commitment. In the end, the conclusion, the implications and recommendations for future study are discussed.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS**

Although, leaders have faith that they motivate their employees to share problems and express ideas but conversely, they use indirect procedure to create climate of, which Hennestad (1990), described as „„double bind leadership““. Few tactics to create silence climate used by the leaders are to make employees realize that they are inexperienced to give ideas and are not authorized to take decisions (Izraeli and Jick, 1986). Consequently, employees prefer to remain silent and do not speak up to their leader in any case (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 1966).

Moreover, evidences have been provided regarding the negative response of leaders to negative feedback which is mostly avoided or postponed, also when provided it is discarded (Fisher, 1979). In addition, Argyris and Shon (1978) states that leaders do so to prevent embarrassment, threat and feelings of incompetence. Thus, they don't trust their employees as well as the reliability of their feedback. Previous literature provided the evidence that organizations have to incur high cost due to lack of leader's ability to encourage openness among employees (Sugarman, 2001; Collins, 2001).

On the basis of above literature, it is found that this sort of leader's behavior results in employees silence behavior. Therefore, it is hypothesize that:

H1. Lack of leader's ability to motivate employee to speak up is positively related to employee silence behavior.



Figure 1: impact of leadership style on employee silence behavior

According to Senge (1999) sometimes within organization such culture and norms are developed in which employees tries to solve their problems by their own and are least concerned about other functional areas. Also they don't discuss expose their problems for open discussion and only share them in private. Hence it result in dissatisfaction and environment of fear and silent is promoted and this silent norms and behavior is made available to the newcomers, to follow.

Moreover Argyris (1977) mentioned that there are some defensive organizational norms and that do not encourage employees to speak up what they feel, thus they are forced to remain silent although they know the reality about certain issues and can suggest solutions (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). In addition, Employees are often afraid to raise voice as it may be considered as lack of trust and loyalty from employee side (Morrison and Milliken; 2000), and also due to the negative consequences generated by the top management, such as, job harassment, low performance appraisal ratings and less chances of promotion (Feuille and Delaney, 1993) and high risk of termination (Westin et al., 1981; Nemeth, 1985; Sprague and Ruud, 1988; Wilson and Harrison, 2001). Many researches mentioned culture procedural injustice in an organization as a factor leading to employee silence (Bies and Shapiro, 1988). As a result of the above discussion, it is proposed that:

H2: Supportive organizational culture and norms are negatively related to employee silence.



Figure 2: impact of organizational culture on employee silence behavior

Unwillingness to express idea, information sharing and providing feedback adversely affects level of employee commitment. Moreover, as stated by Beer and Eisenstat (2000), it have the potential to negatively affect the organizational decision making process. Due to the silence climate, change management process fails and positive communication climate is the only key to the success of the organization (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Additionally, Morrison and Milliken (2000) suggested few organizational practices that leads to the climate of silence within an organization such as centralized decision making process along with absence of formal upward communication process, whereas Schweiger and Denisi (1991) indicated free flow of communication as the practice to be adopted to avoid employee silence behavior.

Open Communication process refers to trust and openness in sharing information and feeling of being fairly heard. Previous research work have shown that presence of formal upward communication mechanism leads to employee's participation in decision making process and increased level of trust on top management (McCauley and Kuhnert, 1992; Smidts et al., 2001). Some researches resulted in a positive relationship between the free flow of information and organizational productivity as well as absenteeism rate (Schweiger and Denisi, 1991).

Thus on the basis of the above literature, it is proposed that:

H3. Absence of free flow communication mechanism and centralization of decision making process is positively related to employees silence behavior.



Figure 3: impact of communication process on employee silence behavior

Organizational commitment is defined as „the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization“ (Porter et al.,1974). According to Mowday et al. (1982), commitment is an attitude that highlights the strength of relationship among an employee and an organization. It is said to be a state in which an individual relates himself with a specific organization and its objectives. It is mentioned that organizational commitment is a phenomenon that tries to develop an exchange linkage between an individual and an organization in which individuals identifies themselves to the particular organization in return for certain rewards from the firm (Buchanan, 1974).

Workers join organization, keeping in mind certain rewards they can get out of working there and expect healthy working environment where they can make best use of their abilities and can freely express themselves. If provided with the opportunities, their level of commitment increases. The organizational Commitment refers to ones acceptance of organizational norms and goals, and willingly putting hard efforts in favor of organization success, and finally wishes to stay with the organization for a longer period of time.

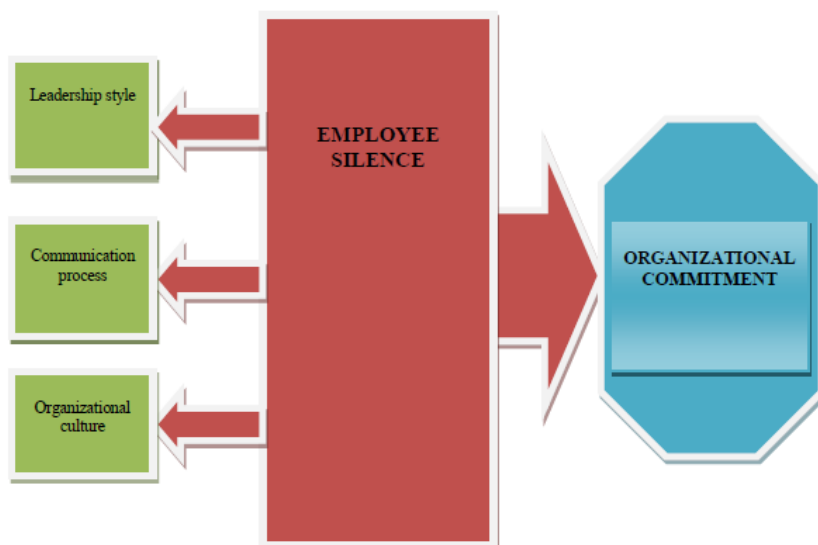
As mentioned by Morrison and Milliken (2000), employee silence creates sentiments of not being worthwhile, and thus in low level of satisfaction, commitment and motivation. In addition, Oliver (1990) commented that dissatisfaction, de-motivation and lack of organizational commitment have negative after effects inform of high turnover rate and job stress. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H4. Employees' silence behavior has a negative impact on organizational commitment



Figure 4: Impact of Employee Silence Behavior on Organizational Commitment

On the basis of the above mentioned review of literature, the following theoretical framework is drawn to highlight the variables involved in it.



**Figure .1: Model representing relationship between independent and dependent variables**

- Dependent variable
- Independent variable
- Constructs of Independent variable

## METHODOLOGY

The necessity to examine the impact of employee silence on organization commitment through leadership style, communication process and organizational culture, directed to the generation of this study. It opts for the NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) sector of Pakistan, particularly Peshawar, which is one of the vital and most rapidly developing sector of the region.

The NGO's, such as CRDO, USAID, UNDP, DFID and GTZ, working in Peshawar, Pakistan were selected as a sample and data was collected from the

respondents using random sampling technique. Respondents in the present study were 200 people from different NGO's in the city of Peshawar, Pakistan. Among 200 respondents, 87 % respondents were male and 13% female. Among them 37% belonged to top management and 63% to middle management, all of them having job experience of two years and above. 36% fall in the salary range of 20,000 to 49,000, 31% were receiving salary between 50,000 to 79,000, 24.5% were earning between the range of 80,000 to 119,000 and among them 8.5% were receiving salary more than 200,000. The age median was 33 years old with a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 40 years of age. All of the respondents were holding Master level degree.

For the sake of gathering relevant information a formal letter of permission was sent to the head of each selected NGO to get permission for collecting data from their employees, through the questionnaire.

It was made sure to the respondents that collected information will only be used for the academic purpose; also the confidentiality of the data was ensured.

The structured questionnaire was developed on account of literature quoted. A pilot-testing of the questionnaire was made by engaging the small group of people and corrections were made on the basis of suggestion made by them.

Five-point Likert-type scales ranging from „1“ =Strongly agree, „2“ = Agree, „3“= Neutral, „4“ = Disagree and „5“= Strongly Disagree, was used for coding the data, throughout the questionnaire.

For the sake of this piece of research work employee silence was taken as an independent variable, with the constructs of leadership style, communication process and organizational culture. On the other hand organizational commitment was considered as the dependent variable.

### **Employee silence**

Many measures are present in the literature to investigate employee silence but for the sake of this paper, the empirical measure developed by Maria Vakola, Dimitris Bouradas, (2005), was used, thus there is substantial support of the reliability and validity of this measurement. Four items were presented in the questionnaire, using five point likert scale to measure this phenomenon.

### **Leadership Style**

This construct was measured using five items, adapted from a questionnaire by Maria Vakola, Dimitris Bouradas, (2005), keeping in mind its reliability and validity, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

### **Communication Process**

This construct used the scale developed by Maria Vakola, Dimitris Bouradas, (2005), hence ensuring reliability and validity. Five items were used with the response options ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

### **Organizational Culture:**

Four items were developed by the researcher on the basis of the literature cited, using five point likert scale ranged from (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

### **Organizational Commitment**

This variable was measured with five questions through a five point scale, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly agree), followed by the work Maria Vakola,



Dimitris Bouradas, (2005). Therefore there is considerable evidence of the validity and reliability of this measurement.

The methodology used in this causal study was based on the primary data as data was directly collected through questionnaire from the respondents. This first hand information was collected personally by the researcher and assistance was provided to the respondents to fill the questionnaire without any confusion hence decreased the problem of common biasness.

Furthermore, the researchers made some observations during the survey about the variables involved in the study and presented recommendation as well as draw the conclusion. The data collected was coded and statistical tools were applied using SPSS V. 17 and correlation and regression analysis techniques was used to extract relevant results.

## **RESULTS**

Table II presents descriptive statistics and reliability estimates of the study's measures. The inter-correlation matrix of all measures is presented in Table III. More analytically, H1 suggested that employee's silence behaviors will be positively related with leadership style. In support of H1 the results demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between lack of leader's ability and employee silence ( $r = .038$ ). Further, H2 suggested that there will be a negative relation of supportive organizational culture and norms with employee silence, which was proved by the results, ( $r = -.094$ ). Also, H3 suggested that employee's silence behavior would be positively correlated with absence of formal upward communication and centralized decision making process, which was confirmed ( $r = .629$ ).

**TABLE II.** Descriptive statistics of the study

MEASURES	N	No. of ITEMS	MEAN	SD
Leadership Style	200	5	2.34	.383
Communication Process	200	5	2.46	.467
Organizational Culture	200	4	3.08	.894
Employee Silence	200	4	2.21	.602
Organizational Commitment	200	5	2.28	.427

**TABLE III.** Inter Correlation Matrix of The Study's Variables (N= 200)

	Employee silence	Organizational commitment	Leadership style	Communication process
Employee silence				
Organizational Commitment	.282**			
Leadership style	.038	-.007		
Communication Process	.629**	.497**	.162*	
Organizational Culture	-.094	.050	.378**	-.165*

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The regression analysis was conducted to further explore H1, H2 and H3 (Cohen and Cohen, 1983), entering employee's silence behaviours as the dependent variable and leadership style, communication process and organizational culture as independent variables. The results of the regression analysis, table IV, showed that availability of communication opportunities is the strongest predictor of employee silence behavior ( $R^2 = 0.396$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), followed by supportive organizational culture to silence ( $R^2 = 0.009$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ) and participative leadership style ( $R^2 = 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). The results of the regression analysis are summarized in Table IV.

**TABLE IV: Regression analysis of the Organizational characteristics on employee silence**

MODEL	Beta	t	Sig.
LEADERSHIPSTYLE	.038	7.810 .542	.000 .589
COMMUNICATIONPROCESS	.629	1.21 3 11.395	.227 .000
ORGANIZATIONALCULTURE	-.094	15.730 -1.327	.000 .186

Dependent Variable: Employee Silence

H4 suggested the positive correlation ( $r = .282$ ), between the absence of employee silence behavior and level of organizational commitment, which was confirmed by the analysis, as shown in Table III. A regression analysis was conducted to further explore the relationship among organizational commitment, and employee silence constructs, entering organizational commitment as the dependent variable and leadership style, organizational culture, communication opportunities and employees' silence behavior as independent variables. The results of the regression analysis showed that availability of communication opportunities to silence is the strongest predictor of organizational commitment ( $R^2 = 0.247$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). This finding is supported by the results of Maria Vakola and Dimitris Bouradas, (2005), that predicted the relationship between these two variables as ( $R^2 = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). The finding showed that organizational commitment is predicted by employee silence ( $R^2 = 0.080$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), followed by relationship between supportive organizational culture and organizational commitment ( $R^2 = 0.002$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ) and participative leadership style ( $R^2 = 0.000$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), the further regression results are shown in Table V.

**TABLE V: Regression analysis of the Employee silence and its constructs on organizational commitment**

MODEL	Beta	t	Sig.
		12.189	.000
LEADERSHIPSTYLE	-.007	-.103	.918
COMMUNICATIONPROCESS	.497	8.189 8.067	.000 .000
ORGANIZATIONALCULTURE	.050	20.217 .700	.000 .485
EMPLOYEE SILENCE	.282	16.524 4.142	.000 .000

Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship among employee silence behavior and organizational commitment, through organizational characteristics of leadership style, communication process and organizational culture. Results showed that there is a positive correlation between leadership style, communication process and employee silence and a negative correlation between employees' silence behavior and organization culture. This finding is consistent with the relevant proposition by Morrison and Milliken (2000) and Maria Vakola, Dimitris Bouradas, (2005). Threat of facing negative after effects and being imaged as a untrustworthy and disloyal by the top management, lack of free flow of upward communication, centralized decision making process and lack of leaders ability to encourage employees to raise voice, are the factors creating silence climate in the organization hence decreasing the organizational commitment. Communication process was found to be the strongest predictor of silence behavior and less by the other factors such as leadership style. This clearly state that employees behavior is directly influenced by the opportunity provided to speak up and share problems with the top management. If employees are encouraged to participate in decision making process, they feel motivated to raise voice and benefit organization in all matters.

Result states a positive correlation between absence of climate of silence and organizational commitment. This finding clearly reflects that if employees remain silent about the issues and problem of the organization it will adversely affect their commitment level towards the firm they belong to. The results of the study indicated that the strongest predictor of organizational commitment is communication process. This

finding is supported by the earlier research work (Putti and Aryee, 1990), and Maria Vakola, Dimitris Bouradas, (2005), highlighting that among all organizational processes, clarity of communication process have a positive influence on the commitment level of employees. When employee feels that he can easily communicate with the higher authority, and share everything in trustworthy environment, he gets more attached to the organization and develop a sense of belongingness, hence takes decision to associate himself with the firm for longer period of time.

Mostly it is noticed that employee silence behavior prevails to avoid its negative consequences for individuals as well as for the organization. For instance, while employees often remain silent about the bad news, positive news frequently flow upward on communication channel to the top management. Consequently a lot of important information is lost and yet not delivered to the top management thus, weakening their decisions ability. On the other hand it does adversely affect the working of the employees (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Nemeth, 1997; Tamuz, 2001). These results can have severe long-term after effects for the employees as well as and for the business.

The critical question that needs answer is that how it can be ensured in the firm that employees will raise voice at the time they are confronted with problem. The leader must realize that to develop an organization employees must be encouraged to provide information regarding the issues faced and must share new ideas and innovations. To do so, employees must be provided with an environment where they can speak up and truly state the issues faced by them Edmondson (2003). If employees feels that their supervisor do not give attention to what they are saying or he is least interested in the information provided by them, they will be discouraged to raise their voice or to participate in problem solving. Moreover leaders should try to change the mindset of the employees that they will be imaged negatively if they speak up, and should appreciate those who dare to inform organization regarding the issues. Moreover, managers should develop such a system that allows employees to talk about sensitive problems in confidentiality. Also, a person could be designated who can present the ideas of the subordinates to the top management Milliken et al. (2003). Theses suggestion could lead to the development of an environment that promotes employees to raise their voice.

To develop an environment that encourage employees to speak up is to provide them with adequate communication opportunities. There should be free flow of upward communication and decision should be taken on the participation of the employees. To compete in the business world, firm not only need to recruit human capital but also to retain it. Retention is gained by developing a high sense of commitment among employees. Employee silence behavior negatively affects organizational commitment. To avoid silence behavior and to achieve high commitment level room for open discussion of problem and ideas should be given and organizational culture and norms should appreciate speaking up behavior.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study presents a new empirical contribution in the field of research, however consist of certain limitations. Firstly, the data was collected through using one-shot questionnaire methodology to measured perceptions of employees regarding the variables under consideration and didn't rely on other sources of primary data. This generates the possibility for perceptual bias that is one of the common problems connected with data

collection (e.g., Premeaux & Bedeian 2003). It may also create self-report bias because respondents answer the questions on the basis of their own mind set. In addition, the study may be contaminated due to the social desirability biasness that caused respondents to answer the questions positively to represent good self-image.

It has been noticed that there are a lot of factors leading to employee silence in the organization; however for the sake of this study few constructs were considered. Thus, it is suggested to conduct future researches with the addition of other constructs.

Another limitation of the study is that it was a one shot study and small sample was involved but it could be replaced by a longitudinal study in future along with the larger sample size, to further explain the concept in detail. Moreover the existing model did not include the moderate variable, thus it is beyond the scope of this paper. Future study could also add moderate variables in the existing model, to see its effect on the relationship between dependent and independent variable. Finally, it could be said that the approach of this paper is not comprehensive but still provides an initial foundational framework to guide future research in the same field.

### **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

The climate of silence influences the firm's ability to identify mistakes, thus negatively affecting the organizational performance. Tamuz, (2001) expressed that due to this silence behavior employee may get the victim of stress, depression, and dissatisfaction. Therefore it is important to answer the question that how firms can generate an environment in which employees feel comfortable to speak regarding issues faced by them. On the basis of the findings of the study few significant implications are discussed in this section.

The result showed that leader's ability to encourage employees to raise voice, formal upward communication and participative decision making process, and healthy organizational culture are positively related to employee silence behavior, thus organizations need to develop such a climate where all these practices take place smoothly so that high level of organizational commitment could be achieved. More particularly, leaders could encourage employees to participate in open communication and decision making processes, which was found to positively influence the employee silence (Morrison and Milliken 2000). Several organizational characteristics, that facilitate the above leader's behavior to take place, may discourage the climate of silence as it is shown in the study of Pierce et al. (1984), that leader's attitude towards the employees affects the working behavior of the subordinates due to the power held by them. It also has the power to develop trustworthy behavior among employees hence enhancing their trust and loyalty towards the organization. This trustworthy behavior on part of employees could be considered as a source of competitive advantage by the top management.

In addition, open communication and feedback channels, availability of accurate knowledge, free flow of thoughts and ideas (Schweiger and Denisi; 1991), are important elements to be considered by the managers in order to cope with employee's feeling of uncertainty, job insecurity and job stress which can obstruct the change management process and also because the firms with the centralized and formal communication channel limits the development of organizational commitment.

In today's fast pace business world, firms are moving towards a flat and team-oriented organizational structure, which highlights the importance of improving level of

commitment among employees at all levels, in order to achieve organizational goals (Mowday et al.; 1982). Moreover, as stated by Morrison and Milliken (2000), climate of silence leads to lack of organizational commitment as employees develop the feelings of not being valued, and creates cognitive dissonance among workforce. In addition, Oliver (1990), mentioned that the above factors results in adverse outcomes for the organization such as high turnover rate, increased stress level and dissatisfaction.

This study in hand presented a comparatively new area in the field of organizational behavior and provided evidences that employee silence behavior, created due to poor leadership style, lack of open communication process and defensive organizational culture and norms, adversely affect organizational commitment. While one may not disagree with the causal justifications of the findings, because of the research design implement, the results propose a noteworthy insight in understanding the impact of employee silence on organizational commitment.

### **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

The study in focus was one shot study, that could be further elaborated as longitudinal study to get more deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. The survey of the study only included few employees of the organization that could be further increased to generalize the study.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The methodology of this paper could be employed by the firms to discourage and handle employee silence and to explore the factors causing silence climate thus raising organizational commitment among the employees.

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This research also has implications for organization that want to achieve superior organizational performance through innovation and creativity. Moreover organizational commitment could be achieve through encouraging employee to share their ideas for the betterment of the firm. Participative leadership style could result in better involvement of employees in decision making process. Further if employees know that they can easily communicate their issues to the co-workers and top management and would be heard, such sort of conducive organizational culture develops high level of commitment.

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### **Questionnaire**

Study on "overcoming employee silence to achieve organizational commitment"

Within organizations employees often need to decide whether to speak up or remain silent, which means whether to share or withhold, information, and ideas necessary to the success of organization. This decision by the employees has a direct effect on the organizational commitment.

This study entitled "overcoming employee silence to achieve organizational commitment" is conducted for the academic purpose that aims to investigate the causal relationship between the employee silence and organizational commitment through leadership style, organizational communication process and organizational culture. Your honorable self is requested to fill the attach questionnaire and be the part of this study by providing unbiased and valid information. Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact if you have any problem in understanding the questions.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

It is to ensure all the respondents that this information will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other reason except this research work. Your honest cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Note: encircle the appropriate choice for the below questions.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**Gender:** Male; Female

**Age:** Below 25 ; 25-40; Above 40

**Qualification:** Ph.D ; Master ; Bachelors ; Other

**Management:** Higher; Middle; Lower

**Pay:** a) 20,000 -----49,000 b) 50,000-----79,000 c) 80,000-----119,000 d) 120,000 and above

**Work Experience:** a) Less than 6 months; b)6 to 1 year; c)1 to 2 year d) 2 and above

Note: Tick the appropriate choice for the below questions, where 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree , 3 = Neutral, 4 =disagree, 5 = Strongly disagree.

LEADERSHIP						
S.NO		1	2	3	4	5
1	I believe that my supervisor handles conflicts well among his team members.					
2	I believe that my supervisor pays attention to what his team members say.					
3	I believe that my supervisor asks for criticism from his team members.					
4	I believe that my supervisor encourages his team members to express different opinions or disagreements.					
5	I believe that my supervisor considers different opinions or disagreements as something useful.					
COMMUNICATION PROCESS						
1	Communication with colleagues from other departments is satisfactory.					
2	There is a systematic and organised exchange of knowledge and experiences among employees in this company.					
3	There is adequate communication between employees and top managers of this company. (formal upward feedback mechanism)					
4	Organisational changes are communicated adequately to the employees.					
5	The company keeps employees informed regarding its decision by involving them in decision mekinf process (no centralized decision making)					
OGANIZATIONAL CULTURE						
1	I would not mind to work for a different company if the nature of the job Is similar					
2	I believe that company's values and my values are similar.					
3	I am proud to say that I am working for this company.					
4	This company encourages me to put the maximum effort in order to be more productive.					

5	I am very satisfied with my choice to come and work for this company in comparison with other opportunities I had when I was looking for a job.					
1	I am afraid to raise voice to the top management as a response to procedural injustice.					
2	I don't express my disagreement regarding company issues, due to the negative consequences coming from the top management.					
3	If you disagree about company issues, it can be perceived as lack of trust and loyalty by the top management					
4	The norms and the defensive routine of the organization forces not to speak the truth to the supervisors					
	<b>EMPLOYEE SILENCE</b>					
1	You often express your disagreements to your managers regarding company issues.					
2	You often express your disagreements to your managers regarding department's issues..					
3	You often express your disagreements to your managers regarding your job.					
4	You often express your disagreements to your managers regarding issues related to job satisfaction such as salary, working conditions etc.					