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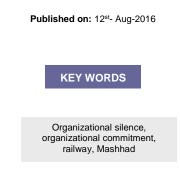
STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT (CASE STUDY: MASHHAD RAILWAY GENERAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES)

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to study the relationship between the organizational silence and organizational commitment among Mashhad Railway employees. In terms of objective, the research is applied; in terms of methodology, it is descriptive and correlational; and in terms of method of data collection, it is a field research. The statistical population in this research is all Mashhad Railway employees in 2015, including 600 employees at the time of conducting the research. For sample selection, simple random sampling method is used which considering Cochran's statistical formula in the following relation, the minimum number of sample under study is 180 people. For data collection, Fayload's Organizational Silence and Meyer and Allen's Organizational Commitment Standard Questionnaires (1991) were used. For data analysis, for research hypotheses testing and for determining the effect of each of the components of organizational silence on organizational commitment, SPSS statistical software, Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariate regression coefficient were used, respectively. Research findings show that there is a significant inverse relationship between the organizational silence and organizational commitment among Mashhad Railway employees. In addition, results show that there is a significant inverse relationship between submissive silence, defensive silence and altruistic silence with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees.



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INTRODUCTION

Organizational commitment is a view about employees' loyalty to the organization and a continuous process which shows the attention of individuals to the organization and its prosperity through their participation in organizational decisions. One of the most common methods of addressing the organizational commitment is that it is considered as an emotional and psychological attachment to the organization. Based on this method, a person who is strongly committed to his organization receives his identity from the organization, actively participates in the organization, is engaged with it and enjoys being a member of the organization. Therefore, in short, loyalty to values and objectives of the organization, a sense of belonging and attachment, and finally staying in the organization are called organizational commitment [1].

In the literature, two approaches are found for defining the organizational commitment. In the first definition, commitment is the objective of employees for the continuous work in the organization. The second definition defines it as an attachment between individuals and organizations and a reflection of the psychological involvement of employees in the organization [2].

In many cases, it is believed that employees do not have the required experience for understanding important issues, they lack the power and authority, they are not good team players and their behavior only can create problems and a negative sense of participation. Managers ironically believe that employees encourage themselves to speak clearly, but on the other hand, they use official methods to silence opposing opinions of employees. Employees who cannot express their opinions about their jobs in the organization will become indifferent to their job which results in the lack of commitment to the job and organization. Organizational silence is associated with the limitation of the effectiveness of organizational decisions and processes of change. Currently, organizations face this problem and



most of them suffer low percent of employees' comments. When it happens, the decision making quality and amount of change are reduced [3]. In addition, the organizational silence prevents an effective organizational change and development through inhibition of negative feedback; therefore, the organization will lack the ability to investigate and correct errors. According to Fortado, teaching supervisors how to refuse demands and comments of subordinates has become an art in organizations and such negative behaviors will lead to silence, so that employees do not express their opinions to the organization and supervisors who encourage such behaviors and reactions [4].

However, it is worth mentioning that in addition to the organization's condition, personality traits and abilities of organization's employees can be a factor affecting the organizational silence [5]. Personality traits and abilities of individuals are relatively fixed characteristics and capabilities which rather than to be learned over time and through experience, conditions and organizational situation, they are priori affairs which are less likely to change; however, they may face a limited change over time through repetition and practice [6]. The research aims to use managers and persons in charge of Mashhad Railway for improving the organization's situation and employee's commitment as well as achieving organizational objectives. Therefore, in the statistical population under study, what is the situation of organizational silence? Generally, the final objective of the present research is to answer this question: what is the relationship between organizational silence and organizational commitment among Mashhad Railway employees.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE Conceptual Definition

According to Pinder&Harlos's definition, employees' silence is the prevention and inhibition of honest and sincere opinions about behavioral and cognitive evaluations and effectiveness of organizational situations to people who are able to change the situation. They identify and introduce two kinds of silence: submissive silence, i.e. prevention and inhibition of providing ideas by surrendering and accepting any condition, and quiescent silence, i.e. prevention and inhibition of providing ideas due to fear and for being survived in the organization, because speaking in such a situation is basically undesirable [7]. By adopting a different approach, Morrison & Milliken consider organizational silence as a collective phenomenon in which employees prevent providing their comments about organization's potential problems [8]. Employees' silence is a phenomenon in which an organization's employees avoid providing their opinions about organizational issues for different reasons and prefer to be silent. Silence is a very important sign of disease, stress, aging, depression or fear in the organization and managers must trace and remove its reason in the first place. Neglecting this issue may lead to more serious events and even death of the organization [9].

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION: SUBMISSIVE SILENCE

When most people call a person as a silent one, they mean that he does not communicate actively [10]. The silence resulted from such behavior is called the submissive silence and refers to the inhibition of ideas, information or comments by surrendering and accepting any condition. Therefore, submissive silence indicates a kind of isolated behavior which is more passive, rather than active [7]. Behavioral characteristics of people who suffer such a silence include low participation, negligence, carelessness and stagnation. They consider such a silence as a factor against voice which is usually a form of passive agreement or acceptance of the current situation. People having such a silence are surrendered by the current situation and reluctant to speak, participate or attempt to change the current situation. For example, an employee avoids providing his opinions because he believes that speaking is useless and change of the current situation is out of mind through speaking and providing opinions and or he may not trust his personal abilities for penetrating the conditions. In both cases, silence is the result of surrendering and accepting any condition and stop actively providing ideas or comments. Finally, submissive silence includes an intentional and passive behavior and inhibition of providing information based on submission or a sense that effective changes are beyond the group capabilities [7].



DEFENSIVE SILENCE

ALTRUISTIC SILENCE

people or creation of negative consequences for the informer [11].

Benefit of other individuals in an organization based on altruistic, collaborative and cooperative incentives is called intentional and non-passive altruistic silence which generally pays attention to others. Altruistic silence is an insightful and rational behavior which cannot be done through organizational orders [12]. This kind of silence is considered as a defensive silence based on consideration and awareness of alternatives in decision making and at the same time, it is inhibition of ideas, information and comments. But, unlike defensive silence, such a silence happens considering others' interests, instead of the mere fear of personal negative results of providing ideas. A comprehensive review of literature on silence shows that one of the dimensions of silence is the spirit of generosity which is directly related to the altruistic silence. Spirit of generosity is the lack of complaints and tolerance of job hardships, problems and uncertainties without whining and complaining. Since it has some interests for others, it is altruistic. Therefore, prevention of whining and complaining (silence) indicates inhibition of a mere attention to personal issues and shows altruistic purposes, patience, politeness and humility toward others [13]. In addition, altruistic silence can include prevention from releasing information for maintaining features such as being confidant.

The incentive of this silence is to create a sense of fear in providing information. Defensive silence is an intentional and non-passive behavior which is used for being survived against external threats, but unlike submissive silence, such a silence is non-passive and includes much awareness of existing problems and options in decision making and is the inhibition of providing ideas, information and comment as the best strategy at the right time. Defensive silence is similar to a situation where people avoid releasing bad news due to the distress of

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Conceptual Definition

According to Derry's definition, organizational commitment is a degree of an individual's loyalty to an organization [14].

In Robbins' opinion, organizational commitment is a state in which an individual considers organization as his representative and wishes to survive in the organization. According to Meyer, Stanley & Herscovitch, commitment is individuals' interest in spending energy and loyalty to the social system [15]. According to Gautam, Dick & Wagner, organizational commitment is an attitude or orientation toward organization which links a person's identity to the organization [16].

In addition, there are two views regarding the organizational commitment: the first one considers organizational commitment as an attitudinal and emotional issue. Based on this view, organizational commitment includes strong attachment and interest in the organization and determination of the identity for which three factors are conceptually considered:

1. Acceptance and strong belief in organization's objectives and values; 2. interest in high efforts toward realization of organization's objectives; and 3. intense desire to stay and take part in the organization [17].

Based on the organizational commitment, the second view is a behavioral issue and this kind of commitment is a rationalistic one. In this view, people are attached to the organization due to their advantages and interests and their investments in the organization [18]. Organizational commitment is an attitude toward employees' loyalty to the organization and a continuous process which achieves the success and prosperity of the organization through participation of individuals in organizational decisions and their attention to the organization [1].

Operational Definition

The organizational commitment is divided into the following three dimensions by Meyer and Allen (1991):

- Emotional commitment (the person receives his identity from the organization and is attached to it, enjoys taking part there and does not leave the organization).
- Enduring commitment (desire to take continuous actions based on the person's identification of expenses of leaving the organization).



• Normative commitment (people stay in the organization because they have a sense of duty not to leave the organization [19].

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Main hypothesis

Organizational silence has a relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees. Secondary hypotheses:

- 1. Submissive silence has a relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees.
- 2. Defensive silence has a relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees.
- 3. Altruistic silence has a relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees.

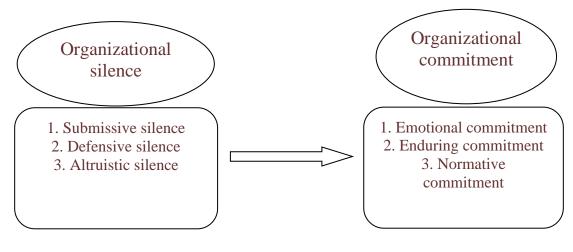


Fig: 1. Research conceptual model

METHODS

In descriptive researches, the researcher looks for the manner of subject including data collection for hypothesis testing or answering questions about the current situation of the subject under study. Descriptive researches are also applied and basic. In terms of applied aspect, results of these researches are used in decision making, policy making and planning. Generally, descriptive researches can be divided into three or four groups, including: survey research, case study, content analysis and ethnography, and if ethnography is a kind of case study, this classification into three groups is correct.

Survey researches as a branch of descriptive researches are a method of data collection in which a special group of individuals are asked to answer some specific questions. In a survey research, the first step is problem statement. In other words, for conducting a survey research, researchers must carefully define their objectives and each question must be related to one or several survey objectives. In the second step, the population must be correctly defined and determined. In the next step, the method of data collection must be determined which is generally divided into two categories of library and field methods. Then, from among the population, some individuals are randomly selected as the sample. Since the most common tools used in the survey research are questionnaire and interview, after the determination and design of tools, they can be considered for data collection from the selected sample and finally, after the adjustment and analysis of data, research findings and results are reported. In terms of objective, the present research is applied and in terms of methodology, it is descriptive and correlational, and it aims to study the relationship between the organizational silence and organizational commitment among Mashhad Railway employees.

STATISTICAL POPULATION

Population includes all real or imagined members to whom we are interested in generalizing the research findings or in other words, the population includes a group of individuals, objects or events which at least has a common

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trait or property. The statistical population is the original population from which the sample is obtained. The statistical population in this research is all Mashhad Railway employees in 2015 which include 600 people at the time of conducting the research.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING METHOD

Sampling is defined as the selection of some individuals, events and objects from a population as its representatives. In other words, sampling includes the selection of a percent of population as its representatives. Random sampling includes sample selection and data collection so that the obtained results can be generalized to a larger population considering error sizes (determined using statistics methods). Random sampling is prioritized over other methods because it uses inferential statistics methods. For sample selection, simple random sampling method is used which based on Cochran's statistical formula in the following relation, the sample under study at least includes 180 people.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD & TOOLS

1. Collection of data required by the research using a field method through the research conducted by the interviewer in Mashhad Railway.

2. Library studies including study of domestic and foreign books and journals and searching databases (internet) for obtaining theoretical foundations and using experiences of other researchers.

3. Using questionnaires as the main tools of data collection for obtaining the required data from Fayload's Organizational Silence and Meyer and Allen's Organizational Commitment Standard Questionnaires (1991).

VALIDITY & RELIABILITY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Validity and reliability are features which must be included in every measurement tool, including questionnaires. Validity means whether the content of tool and or questions stipulated in the questionnaire accurately measure variables and subject of the study or not. In other words, do we really measure what we think we are measuring? Validity is associated with the amount of appropriate information provided by the test in relation to the decision making process. Therefore, judgment about the validity is always studied in relation to a certain decision or particular application.

In addition, validity or reliability of a measurement tool means that if the measurement is replicated under similar conditions, to what extent the obtained results are similar and reliable. A tool is a valid measurement if it has compatibility and regeneration features, i.e. it can be used several times and in all cases, generates the same result. Inappropriate and insufficient measurements can invalidate any scientific research. In the subject of validity, the nature of reality is generally questioned. Validity can be studied without investigating the variables' scale. But, study of validity is impossible without studying the nature and meaning of variables. According to Kriner, obtaining validity is mostly a technical issue. But, validity is beyond a technique and is located in the original nature of science. For calculating reliability, there are different methods, including: retest, parallel peer method, split-half method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Theoretical and experimental studies have shown that from among the above methods, Cronbach's alpha method has higher power and precision. Therefore, in this research, for determining the reliability of questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used. Cronbach's alpha method is used to calculate the internal consistency of measurement tools, including questionnaires or tests which measure different traits. In such tools, answer to each question may have different numerical values. For calculating Cronbach's alpha, first, the score variance of each set of questions in the questionnaire and total variance must be calculated. Then, using the following formula and SPSS software, alpha coefficient is calculated:

$$r_a = \frac{j}{j-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum S_j^2}{S^2} \right)$$

(2)

(3)

(4)

(1) Where,

j= The number of question subsets in questionnaires or test

 S^{2}_{i} = Variance of jth subtest

$$S^2$$
 = Total variance of test

For measuring validity of the questionnaire, the content validity was used. Questionnaires were provided to professors and they were asked whether the questionnaires were good tools for measuring variables and they were



confirmed by professors. For measuring the reliability coefficient of questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used.

Results obtained from Cronbach's alpha coefficient are as follows:

Table :1. Table of reliability coefficients related to each variable

Variable	Cronbach's alpha coefficients
Organizational commitment	0.84
Organizational Silence	0.79

RESULTS

For analysis of data obtained from samples, both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics methods were used. For data analysis, correlation, regression and other related tests as well as SPSS software and other software's were used.

Research results show that 20% of respondents are female and 80% are male. 9.4%, 38.3% and 52.2% of respondents are under 30, 30-40 and over 40 years old, respectively. 13.9% and 57.2% of respondents hold high school diploma and bachelor's degree certificate with the lowest and highest frequencies, respectively. Finally, 5.6% and 32.8% of respondents are under 5 years of service and 16-20 years of service with the lowest and highest frequencies, respectively.

Table:2. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for determining the correlation relation

Independent variable	Statistics	Dependent variable	
		Organizational commitment	
Organizational silence	Pearson correlation coefficient	- 0.703**	
	Significance level	0.001	
	Sample size	180	

** Significance level of tests is 0.01

Based on results of **Table -2** and since the significance level of test error for confidence level of 0.99 is less than 0.01, it can be said that the organizational silence has a significant inverse relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees and the correlation coefficient between these two variables is -0.70.

Table:3. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for determining the correlation relation

Independent variable	Statistics	Dependent variable	
		Organizational commitment	
Submissive silence	Pearson correlation coefficient	- 0.383**	
	Significance level	0.001	
	Sample size	180	

** Significance level of tests is 0.01

Based on results of **Table -3** and since the significance level of test error for confidence level of 0.99 is less than 0.01, it can be said that the submissive silence has a significant inverse relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees and the correlation coefficient between these two variables is -0.38.

Table :4. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for determining the correlation relation

Independent variable	Statistics	Dependent variable	
		Organizational commitment	
Defensive silence	Pearson correlation coefficient	- 0.697**	
	Significance level	0.001	
	Sample size	180	

** Significance level of tests is 0.01



Based on results of **Table -4** and since the significance level of test error for confidence level of 0.99 is less than 0.01, it can be said that the defensive silence has a significant inverse relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees and the correlation coefficient between these two variables is -0.69.

Independent variable	Statistics	Dependent variable	
		Organizational commitment	
Altruistic silence	Pearson correlation coefficient	- 0.647**	
	Significance level	0.001	
	Sample size	180	

Table :5. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for determining the correlation relation

** Significance level of tests is 0.01

Based on results of **Table -5** and since the significance level of test error for confidence level of 0.99 is less than 0.01, it can be said that the organizational silence has a significant inverse relationship with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees and the correlation coefficient between these two variables is -0.64.

Table :6. Summary of multivariate regression model for components of organizational silence and organizational

			Communent
Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Durbin-Watson
0.72	0.53	0.52	1.87

Based on results of **Table -6** the correlation coefficient between components of organizational silence and organizational commitment is 0.72 and coefficient of determination is 0.53. In other words, it can be said that dimensions of organizational silence commonly determine 0.53 of changes in the organizational commitment. If Durbin-Watson statistic is placed in the acceptable interval of 1.5-2.5, a lack of correlation between errors is observed. Based on the fact that Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.87, it can be said that a lack of correlation between errors is observed.

Table:7. Results of multivariate regression coefficient for organizational silence and organizational commitment

	Predictor variable	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficient	Т	Р
F		SE	В	BETA		
2	Fixed value	-1.48	0.15		-9.50	0.001
j	Submissive	-0.02	0.05	-0.02	-0.46	0.64
3	silence					
е	Defensive silence	-0.31	0.05	-0.47	-6.24	0.001
d	Altruistic silence	-0.20	0.05	-0.29	-3.94	0.001

on the results of **Table -7** and beta coefficients, it can be said that if dimensions of organizational silence commonly enter the regression equation, defensive silence and altruistic silence will anticipate -0.47 and -0.29 of changes in the organizational commitment, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Research findings show that there is a significant inverse relationship between the organizational silence and organizational commitment among Mashhad Railway employees. Furthermore, results show that there is a significant inverse relationship between the submissive silence, defensive silence and altruistic silence with organizational commitment of Mashhad Railway employees. In the explanation of these findings, it can be said that an increase in the organizational silence of Mashhad Railway employees leads to the reduction of their organizational commitment.

Research findings are consistent with research results of DanaeiFard and Panahi (2010). In their research, they show that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of silence (attitude of senior managers toward silence, attitude of supervisors toward silence and communicative opportunities) and professional attitudes with employees' silence, so that there is a relatively intense positive correlation between the attitude of senior manager



and supervisor and employees' silence and a relatively intense negative correlation between communicational opportunities and professional attitudes of employees and employees' silence.

Research results are consistent with research results of DanaeiFard et al. (2011). Research result shows the influence of organizational culture on the organizational silence (atmosphere and behavior of silence).

Furthermore, Maleki Avarisan et al. (2013) show that there is a significant relationship between the psychological empowerment of teachers and its components (sense of competence, sense of being effective, sense of being significant and sense of trust) with organizational commitment.

Tulubas & Celep's researches show that although organizational silence is generally referred to non-expression of ideas, information and opinions by employees, based on the incentives of employees for silence, its nature is different. Sometimes, silence is the result of being surrendered by conditions, sometimes fear and conservative behaviors and sometimes for creating an opportunity for others and listening to their beliefs.

SUGGESTIONS

- Mashhad Railway employees must not avoid providing information for preserving their position (fear of losing position).
- Mashhad Railway employees must express their opposite opinions about the organizational issues.
- Mashhad Railway managers must not stigmatize employees who express opposite opinions as traitors.
- Mashhad Railway managers must provide an opportunity for employees to express their opinions and comments.
- Mashhad Railway senior managers must encourage employees to express their opposite opinions about organizational issues.
- Mashhad Railway managers must provide opportunities for employees to freely talk to their supervisors about organizational issues.
- Mashhad railway employees must share their knowledge and experience with others.
- Organizational changes must be informed adequately.
- Mashhad railway managers must inform employees of their missions, objectives, plans and progresses.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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None declared.

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