

## Towards an Aggregate Conceptual Model of Silence at Workplace: Multi-Level Phenomenon

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The main purpose of this paper was to examine the employee's silence at workplace and also construct the theoretical framework based on existing literature published related to this study topic. In this context, a systematic review was carried out on 64 selected studies related to the topic. This research contributes to the literature by drawing up a concise mapping of prevailing literature on the studies of workplace silence. The reference studies used in this article are already published in the Scopus based journals, which fully follow the high reputation and quality in their respective areas. Based on the previous literature, this study had proposed the conceptual models of silence, which include both pragmatic and non-pragmatic silence. Though, the previous studies proposed model, which comprises of antecedents and consequences of pragmatic silence only. Moreover, theoretical frame work of the study was developed from ABC (antecedent-behavior-consequence) model and Levels of analysis model.

**Keyword:** *Employee silence, organizational silence, Pragmatic Silence, Non- Pragmatic Silence*

Organizations value the suggestions, recommendations and concerns of their employees as employee voice is crucial for organizational development (Fast, Burris, & Bartel, 2014). Furthermore, it helps in the implementation of change (Bel, Smirnov, & Wait, 2017; Carnall, 2007), increasing employee engagement (Kitchen & Daly, 2002; Verčič & Vokić, 2017) and enhancing creativity (Akturan & Çekmecelioglu, 2016). Additionally, improving Organizational Citizenship behavior (Yildirim, 2014), increasing their organizational identification and enhancement of individual performance that leads to organizational productivity (Tsai, Chuang, & Hsieh, 2009). It also assists in making interpersonal relationship structure better (Mitrofan & Bulborea, 2013), minimization of uncertainty (Klein, 1996), increased levels of employees' commitment to the organization (Kotter, 1996), and opposing status quo (Balogun & Hope, 2003). Thus, keeping in view the vitality of information sharing and communication modern managerial methodologies have been enriched with various instruments such as assessment meetings, grievance systems, and personal meetings to enhance the flow of information (Umar & Hassan, 2013). Notwithstanding the existence of these channels, many employees hold their opinions because of the barriers they face while speaking their opinions (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Such a situation is termed as "organizational silence" (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) or employee silence (Pinder & Harlos, 2001) that is believed to be worker's choice not to speak their esteemed insights and concerns with respect to organizational procedures, frameworks and components. The idea of voice and silence took its inception with Hirschman's (1970) EVLN model that states that employees in dissatisfactory circumstances may respond in four ways: it is possible that they leave the organization (Exit), raise voice (Voice),

stay in the organization and wait for the environment to become conducive for speaking up (Loyalty), and they connive of the circumstance (Neglect) thus silence is exhibited in all three responses except voice. According to him, voice is active that is meant for changing an awful situation, while silence is passive that is equated with agreement. Later on, many researchers criticized Hirschman's work for his short-sighted methodology toward silence. For instance, Pinder and Harlos (2001) examine the relationship between voice and silence proposed by Hirschman (1970) to determine how workers show a sense of disappointment. They contend that Hirschman's idea depends on a straightforward twofold [either/or] approach, that perceives the disappointment of employees either when they raise their voice or exit. Similarly, Slade (2008) states that Hirschman overlooked those employees who are dissatisfied and stay at the organization while not raising a voice. That is, he did not consider those options that are beyond these two conditions, for example, ones who stay silent inside the organization and are viewed as committed too. Furthermore, Pinder and Harlos (2001) contend that silence isn't a basic construct rather a phenomenon that includes feelings, reflections, and activities.

After preliminary review of literature it became evident that prior researchers have focused only on intentionality attribute i.e. Pragmatic silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001), which refers to interpret the information in real context ignoring the vital attribute of information. For instance, employees may pass the real information to higher management without highlighting important chunks of information due to intentions of not hiding any information. Thus the researcher believes that there is another type of "Silence" that is opposite to "Pragmatic Silence" and could be termed as "Non-pragmatic silence". Such silence is defined as "Any such state that leads to non-strategic failure of the revelation of such information that is vital for an organization". For example, employees may not be able to reveal the important information due to less experience and knowledge about the situation. Additionally, it could be inferred that silence at the workplace is an aggregate of both types of silence i.e. Pragmatic silence (PS) or Non-pragmatic silence (NPS). But unfortunately, such an important phenomenon has received not ample attention and more rigorous and relevant research is needed

to be carried out in this domain (Harlos, 2016). Though various studies have connected PS to numerous individual and collective level behaviors such as organizational success (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997), wastage of resources both in terms of effort and cost (Liu, Wu, & Ma, 2009), sabotage of work-related improvement efforts (Donaghey, Cullinane, Dundon, & Wilkinson, 2011), Organizational Citizenship behavior (OCB) (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009), job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005), ineffective leadership, damaging error correction process (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000), and Change and development (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). But no study has addressed the effects of NPS for individual employees and organizations. Similarly, much work has been done to investigate the drivers of PS such as Harlos (2016) believe that silence is an individual act and impacted by situational, social, political and monetary variables, favorable or unfavorable circumstances (Mikulay, Neuman, & Finkelstein, (2001), "Spirals of silence theory" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) and, group dynamics (Neill, 2020) are just a few examples. However other researchers argue that such behavior is the function of individual factors such as sex-orientation (McCabe, Ingram, & Dato-On (2006), type of personality (Henle, 2005), and Conscientiousness; one Big Five personality trait (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). On the other hand, NPS remains unattended.

## Review of Literature

Many researchers have classified this phenomenon on the basis of different attributes such as level of prevalence as Morrison and Milliken (2000) believe it to be a group or collective act (Organizational Silence) while Pinder and Harlos (2001) consider it as an individual behavior (Employee Silence). Similarly, other have categorized it on the basis of interests behind silence such as acquiescent silence, Quiescent silence, prosocial silence and, opportunistic silence (Knoll & Van Dick, 2013) and Quiescent silence, Acquiescent silence and, Defensive silence (Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003). Previously and Sobkowiak (1997) suggested that silence could be either acoustic (i.e., sounds-based) or speech-related (i.e., discourse related). Pinder and Harlos (2001) elaborate the former as the absence of sound waves. Further, they argue that pragmatic silence is in the human domain that reflects all withholding of information that are strategic in nature. Thus, it can be inferred that all such silences fall under the umbrella of Pragmatic silence that are strategic in nature no matter what the underlying motives are. Conversely, this research proposes that all those silences that are speech based but are not strategic in nature might be termed as "Non-pragmatic" silence.

After reviewing the voice and silence literature it became evident that the researchers were only focused on "Pragmatic silence" but looking at the vitality of information sharing in decision making, taking corrective actions, organizational learning Non-Pragmatic silence too becomes very crucial to be pondered upon as many employees may possess vital information that may be very important but not revealed Non-Pragmatically. Both these types would be discussed in detail in following sections. However, it seems necessary here to highlight some basic distinctions between them. Kurzon (1998, 2007) argues that Intentional silences (Pragmatics silence) are driven by the mood of the beholder while un-intentional (Non-pragmatic) by psychological state. Further, the former always show an unwillingness to speak while the later a

willingness but hindered by some other factors such as psychological e.g. anxiety (Nakane, 2007. p.97).

## Non-Pragmatic Silence and its Antecedents

By looking at the critical discourse analysis, organizational communication and organizational psychology literature, we discover that people are not always silent pragmatically (Schröter & Taylor, 2017; Schröter, 2013; Berger, 2004; Kurzon, 1995, 1998, 2007). Rather there are situations driven by psychological/individual factors resulting in no communication. Such as Locus of control (Martinko, Gundlach, & Douglas, 2002) and Type of personality (Henle, 2005). This type may include an array of psychological silences such as unsolicited predetermined employee silence (Chou & Chang, 2017), Speechlessness (Berger, 2004), Autism spectrum Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), Un-intentional silence (Kurzon, 1998) and, selective mutism (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). These silences are non-strategic in nature and are functions of individual factors such as type of personality (Motowild, Borman, & Schmit, 1997), Extraversion (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), Big Five personality characteristics (Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014; Nikolaou, Vakola, & Bourantas, 2008; Avery, 2003), and proactive identity (Crant, Kim, & Wang, 2011; Liao, 2015). Thus we construe that in non-pragmatic silence employees "do not refuse" or "are not intended" to communicate such as in case of un-intentional silence (Kurzon, 1998), where the person is hindered by his "ability" to speak. For example "a state of extreme second language anxiety when surrounded by native speakers." (Nakane, 2007. p.97). Similarly, Ekström (2009) points out that sometimes employees don't have answers that constitute an account that is "not designed as an act of refusal". In fact, this type of silence is considered as legal right of the addressee in the UK who might hold valuable information (Stokoe, Edwards & Edwards, 2016).

One of the main drivers of avoidant behavior towards friends and colleagues at the workplace is Social phobia (SP) or social anxiety disorder (SAD). According to American Psychiatric Association (1994), it is a condition including discomfort about social relationship in which there is an anxiety of embarrassing oneself. Epidemiological reviews have indicated social fear to be a typical issue described by significant comorbid psychopathology (Furmark, Tillfors, Everz, Marteinsdottir, Gefvert, & Fredrikson, 1999). Further, it has a close relationship with putative anxiety factors, for example, inhibitions (Hayward, Killen, Kraemer, & Taylor, 1998). Well known symptoms of SAD are avoidant behavior (Essau, Conradt, & Petermann, 1999), for example, withholding one's viewpoint (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). SAD could exist in three subtypes 1) formal talking and cooperation 2) casual talking and communication and 3) perception (Westenberg, Bokhorst, Miers, Sumter, Kallen, van Pelt, & Blöte, 2009). Such people tend to have few or no friends (Beidel, Turner, Young, Ammerman, Sallee, & Crosby, 2007). Moreover, subjects avoid participation in activities e.g. Children at school (Van Roy, Kristensen, Groholt, & Clench-Aas, 2009). Similarly, Weeks et al. (2005) argue that socially anxious subjects report significantly more loneliness and thus non-communicativeness. Similarly, "Speechlessness": a phenomenon when even the most loquacious communicators find themselves at a loss for words such a situation caused by anxiety besides other factors (Berger, 2004). Similarly, "Autism Spectrum Disorder" (ASD): that is described as weaknesses in social connections and deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication

(Americans Psychiatric Association, 2000). Further such weakness has long-lasting impacts on individuals (Gerhardt & Lainer, 2011). Regarding the precursors of ASD Parr, Hunter, and Ligon (2013) conclude that employees with ASD has high occurrence of anxiety. Gillott and Standen (2007) find the same results as they examined 34 adults and conclude that adults with ASD had high levels of anxiety than those with no ASD.

Another similar situation where individuals are found to be silent non-pragmatically is "selective mutism (SM)" (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). That is a communication disorder that could exist in both children and adults (Forrester & Sutton, 2015). Furthermore, they argue that such disorder is driven by anxiety, especially social anxiety (Kristensen, 2000). SM is believed to exist when people fail to speak in certain social environments despite speaking in others (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

### **Pragmatic Silence and its Antecedents**

Pragmatic silence is with-holding information for instrumental purposes (Sobkowiak, 1997; Nakane, 2007) and is modal in structure (Kurzon, 1995, 1998). Furthermore, it is deliberate and is aimed at non-cooperation with the addresser (Kurzon, 1995). For example, deliberately avoiding participation for the sake of face saving (Nakane, 2007). Such silences are paraphrased as "I shall/will not speak" (Kurzon, 1995). Furthermore, there is an external source/authority that compels the addressee to remain silent, such as organizational environment (Dillon, Tinsley, Madsen, & Rogers, 2016), Organizational identification (Monzani, Braun, & van Dick, 2016), role models' and leaders' behavior (Bormann & Rowold, 2016; Rossouw, Van Vuuren, Ghani, & Adam, 2010), opinion popularity (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009), OCB (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007), codes of silence, organizational standards and practices (Pinder & Harlos, 2001), group behavior (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), unclear reporting structures (Weber, 1947), high centralization (Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, & Turner, 1968), standards and protective schedules inside organizations (Argyris, 1977), low formalization, i.e., unclear reporting structure (Pugh et al., 1968), organizational leadership styles and poor communication (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972), and collective sense-making (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Besides these patterns, there are certain motive driven fears that prevail in the minds of the employees that leads to such decision of not revealing anything to those who are capable of changing the situation (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001) such as being labeled as a negative/deviant person (Lemert, 1999).

As mentioned earlier, the origin of the silence may situate outside (Schröter, 2013) or inside (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001) the scope of the addressees' determination that affects his decision of remaining silent. Thus it is inferred that the precursors of such form of silence could be either individual/psychological (Henle, 2005; Pinder & Harlos, 2001) or situational /contextual/organizational (Dillon et al., 2016; Monzani et al., 2016; Bormann & Rowold, 2016; Rossouw, Van Vuuren, Ghani, & Adam, 2010; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). The following section takes an account of the individual and aggregate level antecedents of pragmatic silence. Its pertinent to mention that this model could include a number of variable but this research study included only one individual level (social phobia) and two aggregate level (administrator's attitude and organizational culture) variables as a starting point.

### **Social Phobia and Pragmatic Silence**

By reviewing literature, it became evident that some employees adopt non-communicative behavior just because of having some kind of fears. Examples of such fears that prevail are fear of reprisal for speaking up, fear of damaging one's image in eyes of others, being seen negatively, fear of harmed relationship with boss' and peers, and, fear of negative effects on others (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Similarly, Rosen and Tesser (1970) state that one impetus behind why individuals are sometimes stay silent about the issues might be what psychoanalysts have named the "mum effect". Research on the mum effect exhibits that individuals have a general aversion to pass on adverse information on account of the inconvenience connected with being the conveyer of bad news (Conlee & Tesser, 1973). Workers are particularly uncomfortable passing on information about potential issues or issues to those above them (O'Reilly, 1978). Similarly, Stigmas that are particular traits that are seen as individual defects inside a social setting could be another reason (Goffman, 1963; Ragins, 2008). People with invisible stigmas can hide their character keeping in mind the consequences, thus maintain a strategic distance to avoid certain responses and isolation (Pachankis, 2007).

### **Organizational Culture and Pragmatic Silence**

Organizational culture is considered as one of the most critical factors in the survival and development of organization. Hofstede (2010) characterizes culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one organization from another. Furthermore, he asserts people in organizations vary on six bipolar attributes (i.e., power distance, individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and femininity, long-term orientation, indulgence and restraint). Employees' propensity towards a certain behavior depends upon their assessment of the circumstance as favorable or unfavorable (Mikulay et al., 2001). According to Denison and Mishra (1995) organizational culture is the procedure of doing things at an organization. Thus, it decides the social identity of an organization. Karakas and Sarigollu (2013) determines that organizational culture is one of the key factors that could lead to silence. Additionally, where culture of confidence the propensity of speaking up increases that positively affects employees' performance and efficiency. Similarly, Joseph and Dai (2009) state that there is a strong positive relationship between organizational culture and employee's involvement. Zhang, Huai and Xie (2015) assert that challenging factors at organizations increase the levels of silence and vice versa, provided that there is a high degree of leader-follower exchange. Researches also show that leadership has an impact on employee's decisions to speak up or remain silent such as Transformational leadership has inverse effects of levels of silence (Lopez, 2016). Talking of other cultural dimensions, Dedahanov, Lee, Rhee, and Yusupov (2016) discover that power distance and collectivism also vary the levels of voice and silence across organizations. In this regard, Jones (2016) determines that figuring out how to make the conditions where employees ceaselessly end the silent, raise and react to concerns is basic in building up a consistent and responsive learning culture. Taking it further that the nature of punishment and opportunities for communication are also crucial for employee's silence, where there are less opportunities for communication and punishment over raising questions, people will be more prone to remain (Dedahanov, Lee, Rhee, & Yusupov, 2016). Furthermore, stressful culture at organizations discourages employees speaking up too.

### **Supervisor's Attitude and Pragmatic Silence**

Argyris (1977) highlights that in some organizations, top-level management is self-intrigued and conniving; they will then act in ways that discourage upward communication. Moreover, top managers frequently make conditions helpful for organizational silence because of their conviction that the administration knows best about most issues of organizational significance. Glauser (1984) notices the conviction that administrators should direct and control while subordinates must show unquestioning compliance. Besides, the controlling style of the administrator affects the decisions whether to speak or not, e.g., Abusive leadership (Morrison, 2014). This type of leadership leads to develops emotional exhaustion amongst employees and subsequently they turn silent (Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015). Moreover, Detert and Treviño (2010) and (Kranz & Steger, 2013) endorse the same effects of abusive leadership style for employee silence and voice at organizations.

### **Consequences of Non-Pragmatic and Pragmatic Silence**

As the NPS has never been discussed in the literature so are its consequences but this study proposes that such silence may have an impact on individual job outcomes and job attitudes, and organizational outcomes as the literature shows that pragmatic silence does have.

Speaking about the impacts of pragmatic silence, it could be concluded that such state has negative effects not only on employees' performance (Çınar et al., 2013) but also on organizational performance (Bagheri, Zarei, & Aeen, 2012). In this regard, Donaghey et al., (2011) argue that positive changes in organizations are affected by withholding data and concerns e.g., organizational processes (Dyne et al., 2003); and error correction process, and employee trust (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000). As silence leads to ambiguity e.g. subjectivity and uncertainty stem from silence as there is no discourse so it's difficult to judge the expectations of the observer (Tannen, 1985). Similarly, such state negatively affects the behaviors of employee such as worker's capacity to work in the organization (Tyler, 1978), Organizational Commitment and Job satisfaction (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005), OCB (Çınar, Karcıoğlu, & Alioğlu, 2013) are just few examples. The proceeding lines discuss the consequences of both pragmatic silence for both Individuals and organizations.

### **Pragmatic Silence and Organizational Citizenship**

Effective achievement of an organization is only possible if employees at organizations make cooperative efforts (Barnard, Barnard, & Andrews, 1968). Thus, such behavior is imperative for optimal performance and competitive advantage (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The idea of organizational citizenship behavior was first presented by Organ (1988). Organ characterized OCB as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that promotes the effective functioning of the organization". According to Organ's definition OCB reflects "good soldier syndrome" that is so vital for the effective and efficient functioning of an organization. It implies performing beyond formal requirements by filling up the gaps between practices and rules and regulations, such as extra-role behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Researchers identify a negative relationship between silence at workplace and OCB (e.g. Çınar et al., 2013; Zehir, Müceldili, Altındağ, Şehitoğlu, & Zehir,

2014; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). As they conclude that when employees are not permitted to express their concerns their OCB levels diminish.

### **Pragmatic Silence and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction may be defined as the extent to which a staff member has favorable or positive feelings about work and the work environment (Miskel & Hoy, 2001). Extensive amount of research has been undertaken to determine antecedents of job satisfaction such as Hackman and Oldham (1976), Herzberg (1968), Locke & Dunnette (1976), Schneider & Alderfer (1973) and Vroom (1964), it is obvious that no single theory can clarify the phenomenon entirely rather the best way to study job satisfaction is to apply the most suitable theory in that particular setting (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002). Amongst these drivers, silence is believed to be one of the precursors as found out by various studies such as (Şimşek & Aktas, 2014), Amah & Okafor (2008), Barçın (2012), Tangirala & Ramanujam (2008), Vakola & Bouradas (2005) and, Dyne et al., (2003). Moreover, investigations have revealed that those who keep silence have lower levels of job satisfactions as compared those who speak (Klaas, Olson-Buchanan & Ward, 2012; Morrison, 2014).

### **Pragmatic Silence and Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment describes the attitude of an employee towards organization goals. More specifically, Organizational commitment explains the emotional attachment of employees to their workplaces (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). The construct has been researched for more than three decades and a number of researchers have worked in this domain such as Buchanan (1974); DeCotiis and Summers (1987); Reichers (1985); McGee Wanguri (1995); and Gaertner & Nollen (1989). It has been linked to many other constructs and the results are both positive and negative (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Negative relations have reliably been found with proportions of strain, including psychosomatic symptoms (e.g., Addae & Wang, 2006; Richardsen, Burke, and Martinussen, 2006), physical health complaints (e.g., Probst, 2003; Wegge, Dick, Fisher, West, & Dawson (2006), psychological well-being complaints, for example, anxiety (e.g., Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Tucker, Sinclair, & Thomas, 2005), and felt stress (e.g., Lambert, Hogan & Griffin, 2008). Silence has a negative impact on organizational commitment such as by reducing factors that lead to silence decrease the levels of silence and thus employees communicate freely. This in turn increases their levels of organizational commitment (Dimitris & Vakola, 2007; Amah & Okafor, 2008; Nikmaram, Yamchi, Shojaii, Zahrani, & Alvani, 2012).

### **Pragmatic Silence and Organizational Change**

Organizations always face a lot of hurdles to implement change. Information communication that is sometimes hindered in an organization, is the key to change the implementation process (Colombo & Delmastro, 2002). In this regard, Bel et al. (2017) state that at some organizations practices and procedures get entrenched that is very difficult to change. However, it's imperative for organization to overcome these hurdles. Bolton & Dewatripont (1994) state that effective decision making is not possible without proper communication. This view has been endorsed by Garfagnini,

Ottaviani, and Sørensen (2014). Furthermore, many researchers argue that open communication enhances managerial practices and firm performance, such as Bloom & Van Reenen (2007); Bloom, Sadun, and Van Reenen (2015) and Nemlioglu and Mallick (2017). This means that not sharing information i.e. keeping silence could affect the organizational change implementation.

#### Methodology

The organizational silence is believed to be worker's choice not to speak their esteemed insights and concerns with respect to organizational procedures, frameworks and components. To analyze the relevant research work, the present study utilized the systematic literature review (SLR) approach to examine prior literature (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011). The template of PRISMA flowchart is used to describe the overall procedure of selection and rejections of studies for the literature review on organizational silence or silence at workplace. The PRISMA statement helps the investigator to enhance the review paper's reporting. This systematic review is limited to the literature published in the Scopus database.

#### Literature Search

The keywords used to find the literature in the Scopus database were “organizational silence” OR “workplace silence”. A total number of 113 articles were shown by database on an initial search. The search then limited to the subjects Business, Management and Accounting, Social science, and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, limited the number of articles to 81. Moreover, only English language published articles were selected, and total number limited to 70 articles. Furthermore, the study is based only on articles, review and conference papers, whereas book publication was excluded and finally 64 articles were included in the review.

#### Quality Assessment

For maintaining the quality of the review, every kind of duplication was checked very thoroughly on the excel sheets. Abstracts and conclusions of the articles are checked deeply for the analysis and purification of the articles to ensure the quality and relevance of academic literature included in the review process.

All the above steps for systematic literature review have been shown in the PRISMA flowchart, which is as follows.

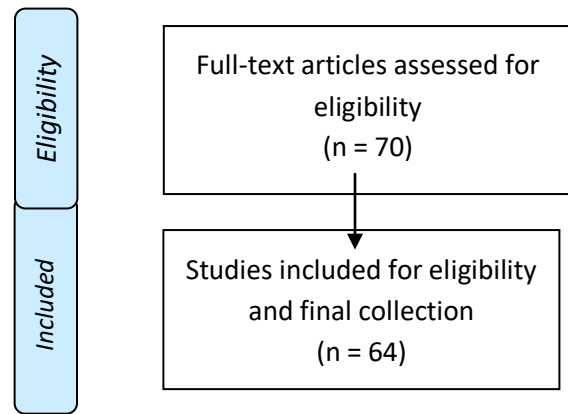
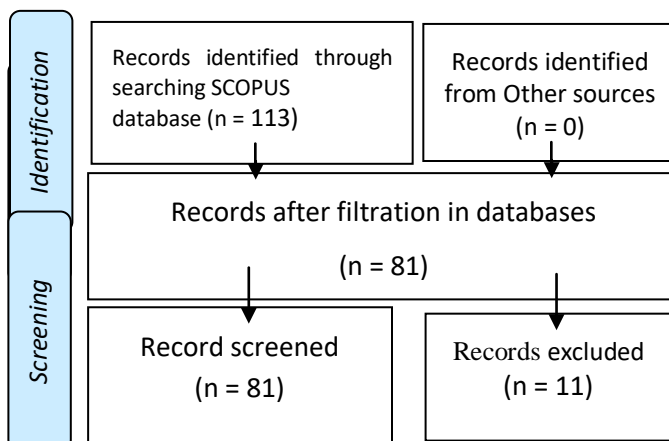


Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart

The final 64 selected articles are utilized for the analysis process, which includes document-type, year-wise, and country-wise publications of the articles.

#### Year-wise Publications

The study is not focusing on the specific time frame for the articles published in years. The key objective of the year-based selection of articles is to consider the number of publications in a given year and satisfy the criteria for the review. The figure 2 shows the year base graph of publications that the year 2016 and 2019 are contributing the highest number with the 12 articles each year.

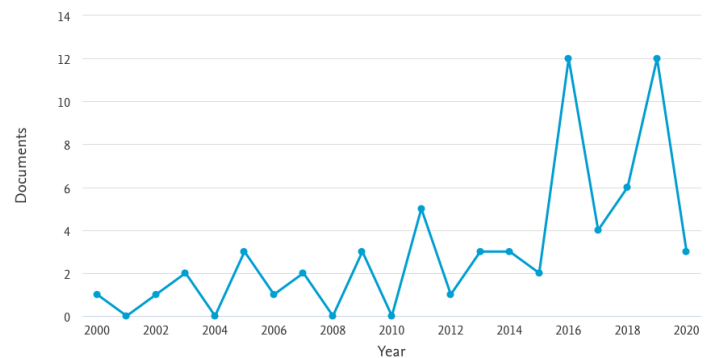
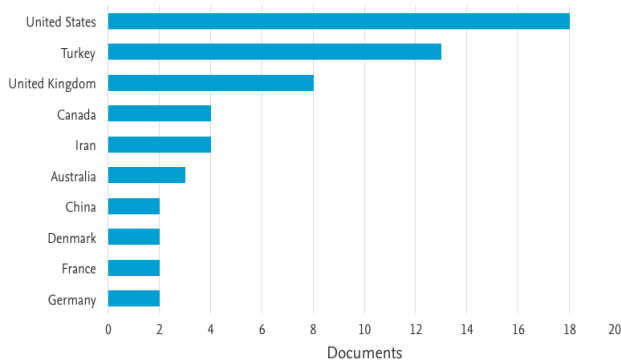


Figure 2: Year-wise Publications

#### Country-wise Publications

The country-wise analysis indicates that in which country most of the researches on this study topic are published. Figure 3 demonstrates the detail findings of the country based publications contribution. United States is on top of the list with 18 articles included in present study, followed by Turkey having 13 articles.

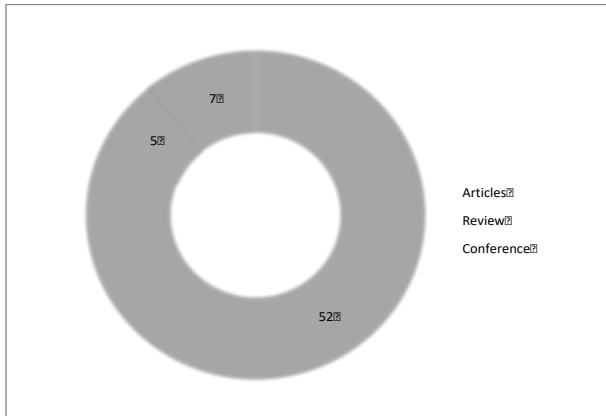
United Kingdom and two countries (Canada and Iran) are at 3 and 4 in the list respectively with 8 and 4 articles contributed to this study. The other countries details are also exhibited in the figure.



**Figure 3: Country-wise Publications**

### Document-types

For the current study, the total number of papers selected for systematic review are 64, which includes empirical articles in journals, review and conference papers. The total 52 consists of 5 review papers and 7 conference papers. Figure 4 denotes the type of publication after the findings of quality assessment for paper selection.



**Figure 4: Document-type Publications**

Table 1 includes the 10 most cited studies on the subject of workplace silence from 2000 to 2020. Most of the studies were questionnaire based and in developed countries context (e.g. Cetin, 2020; Erdoydu, 2018), while few qualitative and review papers were also included (E.g. Fernando and Prasad, 2019; Pope, 2019).

Table:1 Highly cited studies related to workplace silence in literature

Sr. No.	Authors	Methodology	Conclusion
1	Cetin, 2020	Questionnaire	The findings of the study defensive silence and acquiescent silence affect organizational commitment negatively, whereas prosocial silence has a positive effect on it.
2	Fernando and Prasad, 2019	Qualitative	The results show that organizational silence is the product of various third-party actors (e.g. line managers, HR, colleagues) who mobilize myriad discourses to persuade victims not to voice their discontent.
3	Pope, 2019	Interviews	The findings suggested that UK National Health Service (NHS) is systemically and institutionally deaf, bullying, defensive and dishonest. There appears to be a culture of fear, lack of voice and silence.
4	Erdoydu, 2018	Questionnaire	Results of the study concluded that higher the perception of organizational justice behaviors, the less the organizational cynicism. Moreover, there was a positive significant correlation between organizational silence and organizational cynicism.
5	Hozouri et al. 2018	Questionnaire	The results show that organizational silence had a negative relationship with organizational commitment by controlling organizational rumors. Likewise, without controlling organizational rumors, the impact of organizational silence or organizational commitment was increased, negatively
6	Inandi et al. 2017	Qualitative	The research result suggests that there is a medium level relationship between women teachers' career barriers and their organizational silence.
7	Kumar et al. 2016	Quantitative	The findings clearly show a mediation effect of work culture and transformational style on organizational silence and member's intention leave.
8	Brinsfield, 2013	Qualitative	Results indicate that six dimensions of silence motives (ineffectual, relational, defensive, diffident, disengaged, and deviant) emerged from the data, which can be reliably measured and provide incremental value for understanding and assessing employee silence
9	Detert and Edmondson, 2011	Qualitative	The findings indicate that implicit voice theories are widely held and significantly augment explanation of workplace silence
10	Morrison and Milliken, 2000	Qualitative	The findings suggest that it is common for employees to think that speaking up is useless and even dangerous-beliefs that are clearly at odds with notions of empowerment, involvement, and pluralism.

### Construction of theoretical framework based on literature

The model of this study has been drawn upon the models of silence proposed by Vakola and Bouradas (2005). But the difference is that their model comprised antecedents and

consequences of pragmatic silence only while this model is inclusive of both pragmatic and non-pragmatic silence. Furthermore, the model utilizes two tools of analysis namely; ABC (antecedent-behavior-consequence) model and Levels of analysis model. The details and rationale behind employing them have been given below.

### ABC Model

Research in the domain of behavioral science is undertaken to understand various behaviors and the factors that control them (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1991, p. 3). Moreover, behavior could be changed in two ways either by focusing on antecedents (ex-ante) or consequences (ex-post). One such device is ABC model (Figure 5) of behavior change. It comprises three components i.e. Antecedent, Behavior, and Consequence. This model has been utilized by numerous researchers in the field of organizational studies (Daniel, 1989, 1994; Komaki, 1986; Luthans & Davis, 1979). According to Daniels (1989) antecedents could be a thing or event coming prior and molds our action. Besides this, they provide information, they are linked with the results, results may sometimes act as antecedents and if they are not coupled with consequences they become less effective as they leave only short-term effects.

In this model of silence just three antecedents have been incorporated as a starting point namely; Social Phobia that is related to individual employees, the administrator's attitude that is connected to the management and the organizational culture that depicts the overall culture of the organization.

Behavior is the thing that you observe employees working-a pinpoint (Ayers, Clarke, & Murray, 2015). A pinpoint is an explicit depiction of performance that indicates to any activity (process) of any employee or outcome/result (Daniels, 1989). In this model of silence, two types of behaviors are included; pragmatic silence and, non-pragmatic silence. Both of them have already been discussed in the literature review section.

Consequences refer to the outcomes that occur after an event and could either increase or decrease the propensity of the occurrence of the same event (Daniels, 1989). This aggregate model has included three individual level consequences and one organizational level consequence. Of three individual level consequences two are job attitudes i.e. job satisfaction and organizational commitment while one individual level job outcome namely; organizational citizenship behavior. The organizational level consequence that heavily depend upon open communication and information sharing has also been included i.e. organizational change.



Figure5: ABC Model

### Levels of Analysis

Besides ABC model, this aggregate model of silence utilizes another tool of analysis called Levels of Analysis model (Figure 6). This particular tool is used to get a better understanding of the phenomenon as a certain phenomenon may be confined to certain

levels. So it is necessary to keep the concerned level under consideration.

By reviewing the voice and silence literature it is evident that researchers are at dissent about the existence of silence e.g., Morrison and Milliken (2000) believe it to be a collective phenomenon while Pinder and Harlos (2001) considers it Individual level. Consequently, researchers have investigated either individual level antecedents or organizational level antecedents but both rarely, except one study conducted by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008). Examples of individual antecedents are organizational identification (Monzani et al., 2016), OCB (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007), Job satisfaction (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Conversely, others believe that organizational level antecedents play more vital roles e.g., organizational environment (Dillon et al., 2016), role models and leaders (Bormann & Rowold, 2016; Rossouw et al., 2010), opinion popularity (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009), codes of silence, organizational standards and practices (Pinder & Harlos, 2001), group behavior (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), unclear reporting structures (Weber, 1947), high centralization (Pugh et al., 1968), standards and protective schedules inside organizations (Argyris, 1977), low formalization i.e. unclear reporting structure (Pugh et al., 1968), organizational leadership styles and poor communication (Cohen et al., 1972) and collective sense-making (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

It is pertinent to mention that all this bifurcation into individual level and aggregate level antecedents has been done for pragmatic silence only, and we don't find any such study that investigates the impact of both these mutually exclusive group of antecedents on pragmatic and non-pragmatic silences. And the impacts of these mutually exclusive types of silences. So this study responds to this call. It considers one individual level antecedents namely; Social Phobia and two organizational level antecedents' organizational culture and administrators' attitude to explain both pragmatic and non-pragmatic silence. Additionally, consequences for both the types of silence have also been bifurcated i.e. individual level outcomes and organizational level outcome as discussed in preceding lines. Fig.2 depicts the conceptual model developed in this study.

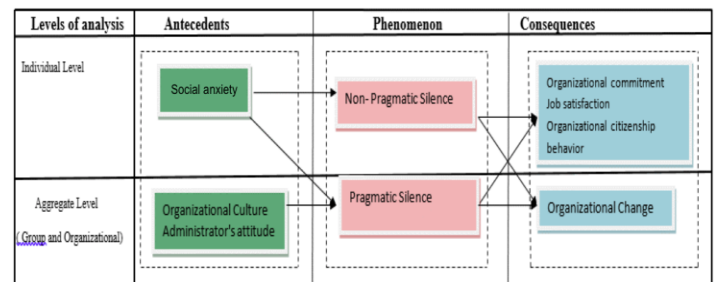


Figure 6: Levels of Analysis

### Discussion

The current systematic literature review examined year-wise articles published, which displays rising trend over the years, particularly from 2016 to 2019, indicating 53% of the total articles have addressed the issue of workplace silence. Additionally, the analysis was also performed based on the country-wise and document-type of articles. The findings suggest that the top two countries are the United States and Turkey, where the majority of



research work were carried out and published on this topic. In addition, the trend of researchers to publish their work was in journal-based articles.

### Implications

The implications of this study will help the management of the organization that how employees and management together can create better workplace silence environment in the organization.

### Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper was to examine workplace silence and also construct the theoretical framework based on existing literature published related to this study topic. In this context, a systematic review was carried out on particular topic with 64 selected studies. This research contributes to the literature by drawing up a concise mapping of prevailing literature on the studies of workplace silence. The studies used for conducting systematic review in this article are already published in the Scopus based journals, which fully follow the high reputation and quality in their respective areas. Based on the previous literature, this study had proposed the conceptual models of silence, which include both pragmatic and non-pragmatic silence. Though, the previous model suggested by the prior studies comprised of antecedents and consequences of pragmatic silence only. Moreover, the theoretical framework in this study utilizes two tools of analysis i.e. ABC (antecedent-behavior-consequence) model and Levels of analysis model. Furthermore, the limitation of this study was that the selected papers used in this systematic review consider only Scopus database. However, future studies can be carried on by adding articles published on other databases like Science-direct, web of science etc. that may generate more interesting results on this topic.

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