

# The impact of organizational culture on employees' organizational silence In Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Organizational Culture is one of the most important factors that can change the climate of silence. The main aim of this research was to investigate the influence of organizational culture on employees' organizational silence in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

**Method:** This research was a descriptive-correlation one. The target population was chosen from 1900 staff of the University of Medical sciences and Health Care headquarter in Shiraz. Thus 311 employees were selected using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table. The instrument used in this research was Denison (2006) organizational culture questionnaire and Dimitris Buratas and Maria Vacula (2007) organizational culture. Cornbrash's alpha method was used to calculate the reliability. The Item analysis and expert consensus were applied to calculate the validity of instruments. All gathered data analyzed with PLS software.

**Results:** The results showed that the four dimensions of organizational culture include organizational involvement, organizational adaptability, organizational consistency and organizational mission was moderate and the mean scores obtained for each factor were 2.85, 2.82, 2.94 and 2.93 respectively. Structural equation model showed Organizational culture has a significant positive impact on organizational silence ( $\beta=0.68$ ;  $P<.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Based on the results and impact of organizational culture on organizational silence that is positive and significant; The organization further efforts to strengthen various aspects of organizational culture, especially the employees' involvement in decision making; Employees can better express their opinions and thus reduced their organizational silence. In other words strengthening corporate culture is combined with the reduction of organizational silence. Medical organizations can establish appropriate reward system for creative ideas and suggestions to encourage people express their ideas As a result, reduced organizational silence.

**Keywords:** Organizational culture, Organizational silence, Structural equation model, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

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## Introduction

Today's world is called the era of knowledge economics (1), which is the result of creativity and innovation, where organizations have come to understand the significance of knowledge and expression of the staff's ideas for survival in the competitive world, always trying to develop creativity (2). The main and valuable resources of creativity and innovation in organizations are the ideas that are propounded by employees. Organizations, then, acknowledging this point, are always looking for ways to stimulating the employees to express their ideas and comments. However, in some organizations, employees believe that their organization does not support free

communication, sharing knowledge, and expression of ideas, resulting in decreased staff commitment and failure of change management plans (3). In other words, shortage of information and trust for expression of ideas, or organizational silence, as called by Morrison and Milliken (4), causes the organizational improvement programs to fail. In the organizational silence phenomenon, the employees prefer not to express the organizational-related ideas and concerns.

The primary ideas about organizational silence considered it as the employees' loyalty towards the organization and believed that if there were no problems, no one would talk about it, where silence was equal to lack of any problems in the organization (5). However, today, researchers have

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shown that atmosphere of silence, unlike traditional viewpoint, will be an obstacle against an organization reaching its goals. Morrison and Milliken define organizational silence as intentional abstention from expressing ideas, comments, and job-related information, which will decrease the level of staff involvement in the organization (4). The relationship between organizational culture and organizational silence has been proven across many studies (6, 7). According to Danayifard and Panahi, managerial beliefs can influence the beliefs and presuppositions of the staff and may develop an environment in which the employees are not willing to express their ideas about organizational issues (7). By focusing on organizational culture, one can manage the phenomenon of organizational silence (8). Many researchers have studied organizational culture as a source of competitive advantage and regard it as a major factor in the success of today's organizations (9-11). Harrison considers organizational culture as a facade of the organization that develops a special sentiment about the organization (12). Overall, it can be stated that culture in an organization plays the role of a personality in an individual, and is latent; however, it has the power of developing concepts and directing movements and attempts (13). The message and perception of organizational culture is closely related to organizational strategies and have a huge influence on the people working there (14).

Finding themselves in a variable world, the organizations that present healthcare service should also have a special care for the creativity and intellectual involvement of employees. As was discussed previously, organizational silence is a major obstacle against creativity. One of the factors influencing the negative phenomenon of organizational silence is organizational culture, where for management of silence and facing it and coping with it, first organizational culture should be identified and analyzed. One of the newest and most practical organizational culture models is Dennison model. In his model, Denison considers culture as including four characteristics: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission, each of which includes three indices of management activity. This model has been divided into two halves both vertically and horizontally to account for the dimensions: internal/external focus and fixed/flexible (15, 16). Considering the above points, identification and analysis of organizational culture are crucial across all organizations and especially organizations that present healthcare service, in which human workforce has a significant and remarkable role. In this regard, this research deals with investigation and analysis of the relationship between organizational culture and its dimensions with organizational silence, so that its results help the authorities at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences to eliminate the phenomenon of organizational silence and assist the university function in achieving its predetermined goals. Thus the main goal of this research was to investigate the influence of organizational culture on the employees' organizational silence in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

### *Conceptual framework*

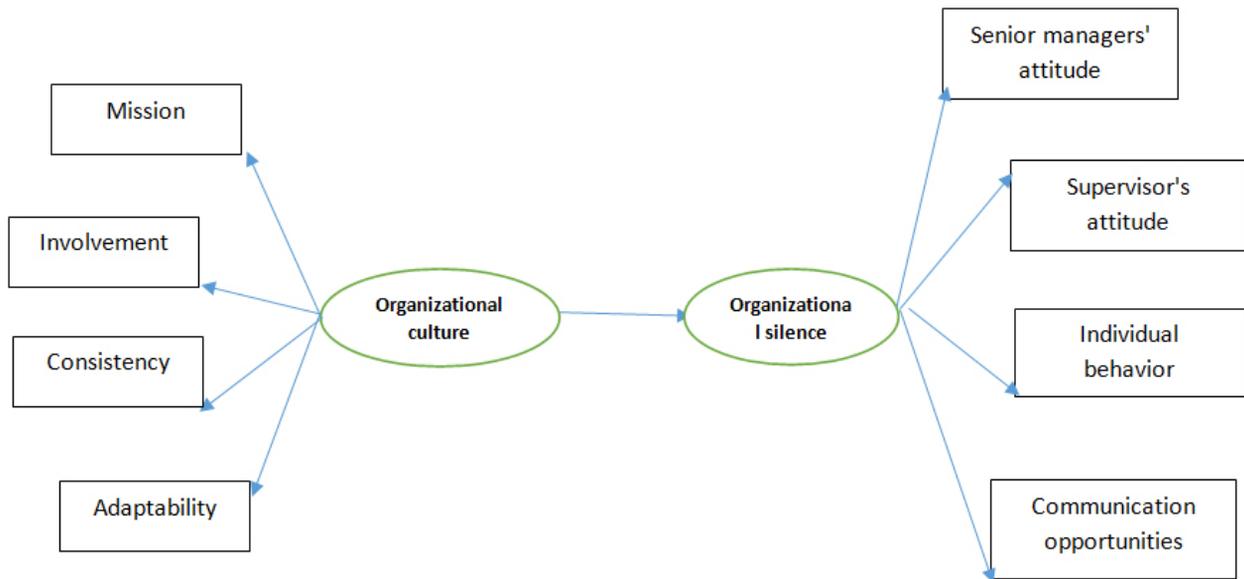
Considering the fact that two variables of organizational culture and organizational silence have been studied in this research, these two variables and their relation need to be elaborated comprehensively and deeply. Organizational culture plays the role in a person's personality. Although hidden, the culture can create concepts and direct movements (17). In many theories, the organizational character is referred to the organizational culture, proposed as shared system of meanings and beliefs and values, which ultimately shapes the behavior of the employees. Culture is a pattern of beliefs, symbols, legends and everyday practices that are done in all organizations. All these together make up the culture, but it is not a simple and variable separable from the entire organization. The culture of an organization is its own organization (18). The results of the various studies conducted by Denison and his colleagues suggest that the organizational culture has a direct effect on various measures of effectiveness and organizational performance and thus having a deep understanding of the culture of an organization is of the utmost importance in improving its performance and effectiveness (19). Denison used a model to illustrate the culture of an organization. This model encompasses four main traits of the organizational culture, including involvement, adaptability, consistency, and mission. These four traits are expressed in terms of a set of management practices (16).

The relationship between organizational culture and organizational silence has been proven in several studies (4, 7). Danaeefard and Panahi (7) believed that management ideas can affect the employees' beliefs and assumptions and create an environment, in which employees show no tendency to comment on institutional matters. The organizational silence is a new phenomenon, in which the staff refuse to comment on problems of the organization and remain silent for different reasons. Silence is a sign for organizational issues, the main associated factor of which must be tracked and resolved by managers. Inattention to this issue could lead to inactivity and even the death of the organization. Pinder and Harlos defined the organizational silence as the staffs' refusal to express their ideas and make effective behavioral, cognitive evaluations regarding the position of an organization (20). Morrison and Milliken (4) also consider the organizational silence as social phenomena, in which the staff refuse to express their comments and concerns about organizational problems. Also, Vakula and Buratas (5) stated that the organizational silence includes four components, including senior managers' attitude towards silence, supervisors' attitude toward silence, communication opportunities and individual behavior towards the silence, which is used in the present study. Considering the fact that the organizational culture is one of the important factors that can change the silence phenomenon (21), identification and analysis of the organizational culture and the relationship between each of the cultural dimensions and the phenomenon of organizational silence can help the managers and decision makers to well manage the silence phenomenon and partially remove it from the organization. Thus, according

to the above discussion, the conceptual model can be formulated as follows:

measures 12 sub-dimensions and includes 60 questions, where for every sub-dimension, there are 5 questions.

Figure 1. conceptual model



**Methods**

This research is a descriptive-correlation study. The statistical population consisted of all employees in headquarter of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences in academic year of 1394, whose number was close to 1900 people. The sample size was determined as 311 individuals according to the table of sample size determination by Krejcie and Morgan (22). To collect the data, the samples were chosen through simple random sampling.

The required data were collected using two questionnaires: organization silence and organizational culture. The preliminary questionnaire of organizational silence, consisting of four variables including the attitude of the senior manager towards silence, the attitude of the supervisor to silence, communication opportunities, and atmosphere of silence, developed by Vokala and Burdas (5), was translated and used as a basis for collection of the required data. This questionnaire includes 18 questions, 5 questions of which are about the attitude of the senior manager to silence, 5 about the attitude of the supervisor to silence, 4 questions are related to communication opportunities, and 4 related to the silence behavior of employees. As to the type of questions in this questionnaire, achieving a higher score in relation with silence suggests a greater degree of belief and comment expressions by the personnel. In other words, the higher the score a person gives to silence, the lower the degree of organizational silence according to that person. For organizational culture, Dennison Standard questionnaire which measures four main dimensions of organizational culture, i.e. mission, adaptability, consistency, and involvement, was used. Each of these major dimensions has three dimensions themselves. In other words, Dennison organizational culture model

The questions were scored based on 5-point Likert scale ranging from absolutely agree to absolutely disagree. To achieve correct information, the questions 6,14,16,22,31,32,34,35,40,41,50,51, and 52 were written as negative forms which were then scored inversely. Following coding of the responses, the data were introduced into SPSS for final analysis. To confirm the validity of the organizational behavior questionnaire, following its translation, experts and professors commented on it. At this stage, they expressed their degree of agreement with the questionnaire's question based on Likert scale and then stated their corrective comments at the end of the questionnaire. The final questionnaires were prepared after applying the comments of professors and removing ambiguous and improper items of the preliminary questionnaires. The validity of Dennison's organizational culture questionnaire was confirmed by Mortazavi Ab Alvan et al (23). In this research, to calculate the reliability of the measurement tool, Cronbach alpha method was used. At the beginning of the questionnaire, adequate information was stated regarding the goals of the plan and its significance, by emphasizing the confidentiality of the obtained information together with the demographic information of the participants in the plan. After obtaining oral consent, the questionnaire was completed by the person. For statistical analysis of the collected data, descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and due to the use of latent variables, structural equation modeling by using PLS software was used.

**Results**

The descriptive findings of the study including gender, age, marital status, and working background of the employees are shown in Table 2.

**Table 1.** Variables' alpha coefficients

Variable	alpha
Organizational culture	0.916
Adaptability	0.807
Mission	0.855
Concistency	0.774
Involvement	0.823
Organizational silence	0.912
Senior manager's attitude	0.813
Supervisor's attitude	0.906
Communication opportunities	0.815
Silence behavior	0.873

**Table 2.** The descriptive statistics for the respondents' demographic characteristics

gender		Valid percentage	frequency
	male	39.6	116
	female	60.4	177
Marital status	single	27.1	79
	married	72.9	212
age	<30	27.9	80
	30-40	46.7	134
	>40	25.4	73
Working background	<10	58.6	164
	10_20	23.9	67
	>20	17.5	49

**Table 3.** The correlation coefficients of the model's variables

Variables								
Organizational involvement	1							
Organizational concistency	0.715**	1						
Organizational adaptability	0.609**	0.622**	1					
Organizational mission	0.729**	0.671**	0.675**	1				
Managers attitude	0.492**	0.441**	0.318**	0.511**	1			
Supervisors attitude	0.432**	0.479**	0.266**	0.477**	0.432**	1		
Communication opportunities	0.666**	0.629**	0.549**	0.704**	0.557**	0.672**	1	
Employees silence	0.356**	0.374**	0.252*	0.349**	0.262**	0.513**	0.458**	1

\*\*P<0.01 and \*P<0.05

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients of the studied variables. The results indicated that these variables had a positive meaningful correlation. To test the hypotheses related to the effect of organizational culture on the employees' organizational silence in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences' structural equations were used, with the results shown in Figure 1.

Based on the results obtained from structural equations coefficients, t value for this parameter (based on the 5 percent error rule in the area of null hypothesis rejection for values outside of the range from +1.96 to -1.96 of each parameter of the model) has been estimated outside of the range. Therefore, it can be concluded that the researcher's hypothesis at level of confidence of 95% is confirmed. The organizational culture is effective on the organizational silence and given the positivity of the path coefficient, it can be said the organizational culture has a direct and significant effect on the organizational silence. The coefficient of determination for the organizational silence was equal to 0.473. So, the organizational culture explained 47.3% of variability of the organizational silence. In this regard, the fitness index of the model was calculated. This index showed the compromise between the quality of the structural model and the measured model and is equal to:

$$GOF = \sqrt{AVE} \times \sqrt{R^2}$$

Where  $\bar{AVE}$  and  $\bar{R}^2$  are the average of AVE and R2. The high value of GOF index (more than 0.4) indicates goodness of fit of the model. The fit index for the model was 0.64, that shows the model is sufficient. In simpler words, the study data fit the factor structure and the theoretical foundation of the research, which represents that questions are consistent with theoretical structures.

### Discussion

In this research, two major variables were studied according to the literature of the organization and management in headquarter of a university. These two principal variables include organizational culture and organizational silence. Further, the relationship between these two variables and their components also belonged to the scope of the objectives of this research. Based on the presented findings, the attitude of the senior manager towards silence does not have a good status (a mean score of 2.5). The majority of the employees considered the attitude of the senior manager towards silence as lying within a medium range for eliminating silence, which is congruent with the results obtained by Panahi (2012). Given the mean score of 2.86 of the attitude of supervisors to silence, it can be concluded that the ratio of people who consider the attitude of supervisors to silence elimination as positive is lower than those who think that the senior manager seeks to develop the silence phenomenon. Therefore, the employees feel that the senior manager does not make any attempt to eliminate silence and seeks to eliminate the organizational voice of the employees. This

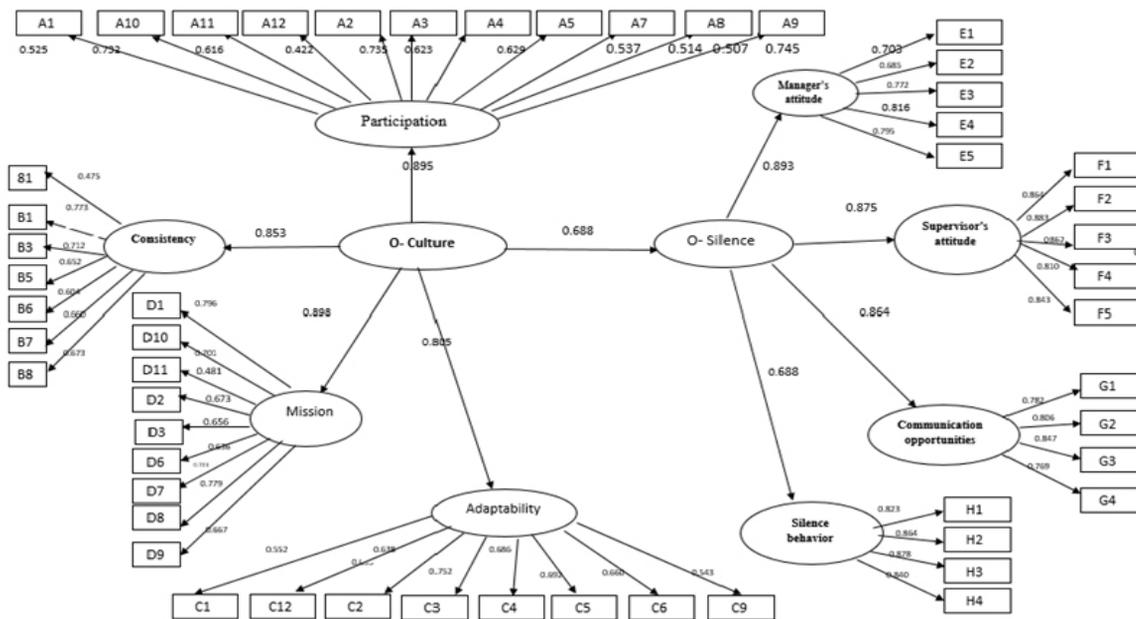
perception of employees might not be realistic and they may have this feeling due to their perceptive errors and the distance that exists between them and the senior manager. However, this perception exists and the manager should take some measures to persuade the employees to express their beliefs where they feel that the senior manager values their beliefs.

Considering the attitude of the supervisor towards silence, the status is not satisfactory, but those who consider the attitude of supervisors to elimination of silence as positive are a little greater in number than those who consider the attitude of the senior manager. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a relatively better status, where in the studies by Panahi (2012) as well as Vokala and Buradas (2005) similar findings have been obtained. However, supervisors should still make an attempt to eliminate the perception of suppression of organizational voice among employees and take effective measures so that the employees are not afraid of expressing their ideas and beliefs.

orientation. If team-orientation grows in an organization, performing tasks in a team fashion and development of working team can provide a ground through which all individuals are able to express their ideas freely, thereby developing organizational dynamics and voice. The results obtained from this index have been in line with those obtained by Danayifard et al. (8).

As to the structural equation model, the organizational culture has a significant positive effect on the organizational silence. This result is consistent with Danaeefard et al.'s research (2011). In order to justify this finding, it could be said that if senior managers encourage supervisors to freely express their opinions and don't question their loyalty, supervisors will transfer this attitude to their subordinates and create the ground for their more participation in the organizational duties. Also, open and democratic communication system that is one of the dimensions of organizational culture makes the employees more responsible so that they do not feel alien in their organization and will find a sense of belonging to

Figure 2. The final model in standard mode



It can be argued that the people under investigation believed that organizational adaptability and its three indices, i.e. development of change, being customer-oriented, and organizational learning, had no effect on silence in the organization. Hassan Danayifard et al (8) have done a research entitled "interpretation of the role of organizational culture in organizational silence in the governmental sector", confirming the fact that organizational adaptability has a significant effect on organizational silence; thus, it is not in accordance with the results of our research. With the increase in the level of participation in the organization, i.e. increase in the three major indices of empowerment, team-orientation, and development of capabilities, one can mitigate the organizational silence phenomenon. Probably, the most important index that can be mentioned here is team-

the organization, accordingly. Similarly, it is recommended that senior executives of University of Medical Sciences try to reduce the staffs' organizational silence to have a successful organization by establishing programs to improve human resource management and workshops on communication skills for managers and supervisors to teach decision-making skills and involvement in organizational problems.

**Conclusion**

Improvement of the indices of organizational culture results in development of a greater atmosphere for expression of ideas, criticism, and voice which lead to development of the level of expression of ideas, criticisms, and voice, thereby managing and eliminating the phenomenon of organizational silence. Accordingly,

using the tools of culture management, it can be expected that the phenomenon of organizational silence can be eliminated in the organization.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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