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**Employees' silence towards the decision-making
process**

Case Study: Public and Private Schools in the Kingdom
of Jordan

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Abstract

Employees' silence towards the decision-making process

Case Study: Public and Private Schools in the Kingdom of Jordan

Despite the huge interest in the silence problem, no studies directed to investigate the underlying motives of the silence phenomenon towards the decision-making process (DMP). All studies searched the silence factors at the workplace in general. However, this study applied in the Jordan ministry of education (MOE) attempts to enhance our understanding of this phenomenon by linking it with one of the most important managerial functions, the decision-making process. A silence model is suggested; it shows the main factors. Following three studies are designed and carried out to (a) investigate the motives for silence towards the DMP from the teachers' point of view, (b) develop a measurement tool of silence based on these motives and testing the hypotheses in the public schools, (c) Testing the tool and the hypotheses in the private schools as part of the private sector. The exploration phase utilized structured interviews with open-ended questions directed to reveal the underlying silence motives and decision-related situations where employees chose silence. In this phase 100 interviews were conducted in both types of schools. The second phase utilized a questionnaire tool that has been built based on the first phase results. The data collected from public schools, and the sample was 1643. Multi regression analysis and ANOVA test were used to analyze the data. The third phase is measuring and testing hypotheses in private schools. The sample was 1208, and the same methodology and analysis methods used in phase 2 were used here.

Among the most important results, a new measurement tool directed at silence problem towards the decision-making process has been developed. In addition, the motives identified in this study are more specified and directly correlated to the decision-making process, which could help enhance the employees' participation. The results also indicate that silence towards participation in the DMP can be measured. However, the silence problem exists at a medium level in both types of schools and inversely related to participation in the DMP. Research confirmed that organizational factors have more impact on the participation in the DMP in both public and private schools than personal factors (H1-2-4-5-7-8). It also confirmed that there are no differences in responses regarding the respondents' gender and education level, but there is a significant difference regarding their age and experiences in both public and private schools (H3 and H6). Finally, the research confirmed that there are statistically significant differences among the silence factors and in silence degree based on the sector variable (H9 and H10).

Based on the results of this research, the MOE has to pay more attention to this problem since it affects not only the DMP but also the organizational performance in many areas. The public sector,

in general, has to revise the recruitment methods; conducting exams and in-person interviews are important and could help avoid many unwanted personal characteristics. Moreover, a plan is needed to treat the schools' current situation regarding the silence problem. Such a plan could be redesigning the training programs to enhance both the employees' personality and management quality.

Finally, one of the important studies to be suggested is conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with Jordanian schools' principals. This helps reach more motives and details on the employees' silence from a different point of view. Thus, more details and motives could be revealed on the silence problem from different perspectives.

1 Introduction

Organizations have plenty and different forms of resources with different functions. However, human resources remain the most important element in the organizations' success or failure at all administrative hierarchy levels. Human resources are the most important source to generate experience and knowledge. However, the employees' role exceeds fulfilling assigned tasks to a broader administrative role (e.g., contributing to the decision-making process, solving work problems, providing views, suggestions, and information on the work-related issues). This contribution by employees could guarantee a sufficient amount of information and details on the workflow, improving the decision quality and overall organizational performance and effectiveness.

Despite the importance of participation and sharing information, employees may prefer to remain silent and abstain from providing information or providing it incompletely. This abstention could disrupt the organization's various administrative functions, especially those requiring and rely heavily on the availability of the largest amount of information in the DMP. Hence, the silence received great attention in the recent studies of organizational behaviours and problems.

Studying the phenomenon of employee silence towards the decision-making process as behaviour driven by specific motives and not as a normal absence of voice is important for several reasons. Bearing in mind that employees silence is intentional behaviour that comes from different motives — it is potentially much complex than that suggested by interpreting it as voice absence. Logically, there are motives behind employees silence that are different from absence motives for voice. Also, individual and organizational factors that cause silence and associated consequences are likely to differ as a function of the fundamental motives. Thus, silence and voice absence associated motives are not necessarily the same.

Although a pervasive phenomenon, some issues remain unsolved, such as (a) what does compose employees silence towards the decision-making process? (b) how can it be dimensionalized and

measured? And (c) what factors give rise to these various motives of organizational silence? Therefore, the proposed research represents an important step in understanding this crucial issue.

A good understanding of the silence problem requires a more in-depth look. The researcher has studied silence as behaviour during the decision-making process. Moreover, although organizational silence has been considered a deliberated behaviour, discussing the behaviour effect without determining the hidden motive(s) is considered ambiguous. Researchers attempted to identify the different factors of silence by presenting it as a reaction to various reasons. However, beyond these studies, which deal with general silence at the workplace, there is a need for more thorough exploration relative to the existence, measurement, and impact of the silence motives. Therefore, this research is vital; it empirically explores the underlying motives of organizational silence towards the decision-making process and its impact on it.

Employees believe that the problem lies not only in their desire to remain silent but also in the factors driving them to do so and their impact on the performance and loyalty to the organization (Morrison, 2011). Therefore, many studies searched deeply in the silence problem to determine the underlying motives and establish the relationship between silence and the different organizational concepts and behaviours such as leadership patterns, organizational loyalty, performance and many more.

Considering this study aims to measure the degree of silence problem and its impact on the decision-making process in public and private schools, the researcher assumes that all personal and organizational factors impact participation in the decision-making process. Moreover, the researcher supposes that there would be differences in responses based on respondent's gender, age, length of experience and level of education. Thus, the study hypotheses would be as follows.

2 Research objectives and questions

The research focuses on one of the crucial issues that could affect not only the DMP but the organizational performance. The main research objectives include investigating the underlying motives of the silence problem in the schools' environment. Also, it aims at measuring the level of silence among the teachers in both public and private schools, testing the impact hypotheses, and determining the relationship between the silence factors and the DMP. Thus, this study answers the main vital questions, which in turn answer the main research question about the motives and factors of silence associated with the decision-making process. These questions include

- Is there silence among teachers towards the decision-making process in the schools of Amman governorate?

- What are the main motives and factors of the silence towards the participation in decision making according to teachers perspectives?
- Does silence have a significant impact on participation in the decision-making process?
- What is the direction of the relationship between silence and participation in the decision-making process in public and private schools?
- Is there any difference between the public and private schools regarding the silence level and the motives?

According to the research objectives and questions, the the study hypotheses would be as follow.

Research hypotheses

- **H₁**: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of Personal (individual) factors (Prosocial factor, Lack of self-esteem, Psychological withdrawal, Diffident Silence and Deviant silence) on the decision-making process in the public schools.
- **H₂**: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of organizational factors (Lack of trust, lack of management support, abusing formal authority, Injustice and Fear of negative reactions) on the decision-making process in the public schools.
- **H₃**: There are significant differences in the respondents' responses based on the demographic variables (gender, age, experience and education level).
- **H₄**: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of Personal (individual) factors (Prosocial factor, Lack of self-esteem, Psychological withdrawal, Diffident Silence and Deviant silence) on the decision-making process in the private schools.
- **H₅**: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of organizational factors (Lack of trust, lack of management support, abusing formal authority, Injustice and Fear of negative reactions) on the decision-making process in the private schools.
- **H₆**: There are significant differences in the respondents' responses based on the demographic variables (gender, age, experience and education level).
- **H₇**: organizational factors are expected to have a greater impact on participation in decision-making than personal factors in public schools.
- **H₈**: Personal factors are expected to have a greater impact on participation in decision-making than personal factors in public schools.

- **H₉**: There are statistically significant differences between the silence factors based on the sector variable.
- **H₁₀**: There is a statistically significant difference in the degree of silence between public and private sector schools.

3 Methodology

Research focus

Our study contributes to a better understanding of the silence phenomenon, where a general model of employee silence towards the decision-making process is presented. This model and its component and related factors are necessary for understanding what does constitute employee silence towards the decisions in processing. Three related studies are conducted with this study as follow

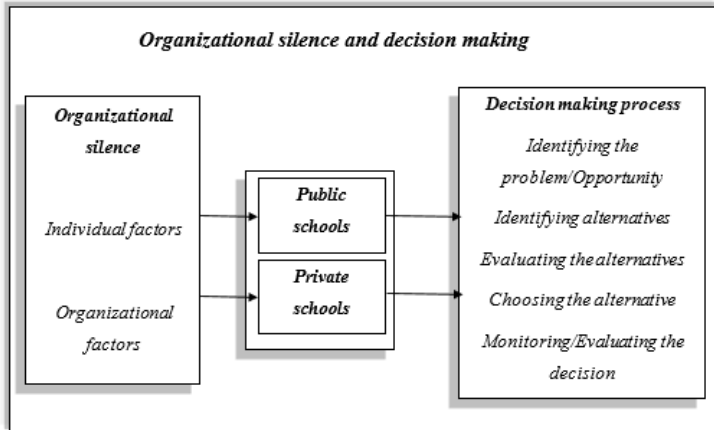
The first study investigates the relative underlying motives of employee silence towards the decisions and develops a typology of employee silence motives based on underlying factors. This study repositions the lens closer to a specific issue to reach more accurate results in this field. Moreover, besides exploring the motives, the purpose is to develop reliable, specialized, and situationally measures of employee silence based on the investigated motives.

Study 2 aims to carry out an empirical study within the public schools to measure silence towards the decisions. The main aims are to (a) refine the items developed in the previous phase, (b) examine the factors and their underlying motives, and (c) make sure of the generalizability of the new measures. This study is designed to investigate the degree of silence and outcomes of specific factors based on Study 1 results. Based on our investigatory study and previous related research, it is expected that the silence to exist among the teacher and all identified factors will impact participation in the decision-making process.

The third study comes from the researcher's belief that the nature of the sector could affect the silence problem and its underlying motives; therefore, this study is the same as the second one, but this time the questionnaire is already refined and tested. Thus, the primary goals here are (a) investigating the silence problem in private schools (private sector), where the previous study was in the public ones (public sector), and (b) make sure of the generalizability of the developed measurements.

In the shade of the above, the study model is to be as in figure 1.

Figure 1: Study model



Prepared by the researcher

The study procedures

Figure 2: Research procedures



Study 1 methodology

Study sample

The researcher did not find a clear guide to indicate the appropriate sample size in this type of studies. However, previous studies clarified that any sample should be sufficient to include the subjects representing all the subjects in the study society. Our study examines the problem of silence in the schools of Amman Governorate, precisely for non-decision-makers, where the target group is the teachers in both the public and private sectors. Based on that, and on the nature of the study society, where all individuals practice similar jobs and tasks, the researcher sees that a sample of '100' subjects will be sufficient. Moreover, the respondents were asked to mention at least one situation related to decision-making and all motives that led to keeping silent. Therefore the number of silence incidents and underlying motives had the potential to be much more than the number of sample subjects.

Interviews

The researcher utilized structured interviews with open-ended questions to investigate the underlying motives of employees silence. The sample was reached through social media sites and teachers' social media groups (Facebook and WhatsApp groups).

Study 2 methodology

The study utilizes quantitative methods to find the relationship and impact of these factors on teachers' participation in decisions. The primary data collected using the questionnaire developed in the previous phase (Study1), while the secondary data obtained from the relevant previous literature.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of 16802 full-time teachers in public schools in Amman Governorate, where they are divided into 5952 males and 10850 females according to the Jordanian ministry of education databases in 2019. The sample size is 1643 teachers of both genders, which is almost 10% of the entire population. Google-drive electronic questionnaire tool was utilized, and the sample was reached using public school teacher-specific Facebook groups after being requested to partake in the study.

Study Tool

In this study, the data required was collected using a questionnaire. It has been developed based on the results of (Study 1). The questionnaire consists of three parts: Firstly, the demographic

characteristics of the sample (gender, age, experience, and level of education). Secondly, 55 questions designed to measure the factors of silence. The last questionnaire part consists of 26 questions that aim at measuring the teachers' tendency to participate in the decision-making process.

A seven-point Likert scale was used for all questions, where the result is between (1-3) indicates a low silence level, between (3-5) there is a medium silence level, and (5) or above indicates a high level of silence. SPSS v24 was used to test the reliability of the study tool and examine the hypotheses.

Reliability of the tool

Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to confirm the reliability of the study tool. Furthermore, ensure that there is no Multicollinearity and that there is no correlation between the independent variables, variance inflation factor (VIF) and Tolerance indices were used.

Study 3 methodology

The third phase is concerned with the silence problem towards the decision-making process, but this time in the Jordanian private schools. Since we are dealing with the same problem (silence and decisions) and the same society (teachers) in a different sector (private sector), the same questionnaire and the same sampling methods will be used. Moreover, the same statistical methods and tests mentioned above will be utilized.

Study Population and Sample

The population consists of 15212 teachers in private schools in Amman Governorate, where they are divided into 2507 males and 12705 females according to the databases of the Jordanian ministry of education (2019). The sample reached 1208 teachers of both genders, which is 8% of the entire population. The random sample method was used to access them, while the google-drive electronic questionnaire tool was employed to collect the data.

The last phase of the thesis is about understanding the silencing mechanism in both types of schools. To do so, the results of the previous two phases are to be summed up and compared. This phase could highlight the differences between private and public schools based on various aspects, as we will show later.

4 Finding and results

The research has led to identifying 55 silence motives related to participation in decisions. Also, the silence level was moderate in both types of schools. The results also showed some difference in the factors that affected employees silence towards the decision-making process based on the sector.

The following table summarizes the results of the hypotheses tests.

Table 1: Summary of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Decision	
H1: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of Personal (individual) factors on the decision-making process in the public schools	Accepted for all personal factors except diffident and deviant factors	
H2: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of organizational factors on the decision-making process in the public schools.	Accepted for all organizational factors except mistrust and Injustice factors	
H3: There are significant differences in the respondents' responses based on the demographic variables (gender, age, experience and education level).	Rejected for gender and education. Accepted for age and experiences	
H4: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of Personal (individual) factors on the decision-making process in private schools.	Accepted for all personal factors except lack of self-esteem and diffident factors	
H5: There is a statistically significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of organizational factors on the decision-making process in private schools.	Accepted for all organizational factors except lack of support	
H6: There are significant differences in the respondents' responses based on the demographic variables (gender, age, experience and education level).	Gender	Accepted for personal factors and rejected for organizational factors
	Age	Accepted
	Experience	Accepted
	Education	Rejected
H7: organizational factors are expected to have a greater impact on participation in decision-making than personal factors in public schools.	Accepted	

Hypothesis	Decision
H8: Personal factors are expected to have a greater impact on participation in decision-making than personal factors in public schools.	Rejected
H9: There are statistically significant differences between the silence factors based on the sector variable.	Accepted for the prosocial factor, lack of self-esteem, psychological withdrawal, and deviant silence. Also accepted for all organizational factors.
H10: There is a statistically significant difference in the degree of silence between public and private sector schools.	Accepted
Own results	

Rejected for diffident factor

Overall value-added

The development of a specialized measurement tool of employees silence towards the DMP should contribute to a better understanding of this behaviour. The proposed model contributes to a better understanding of the motives and factors that lead the employees to keep silent and not participate in decisions. In addition, the investigation of motives and factors (Study 1), and following studies based on these motives (Study 2 & 3), will enable more empirical studies. Moreover, most often, the work tasks differ in both the public and private sectors. These differences and their companion factors, out of the study model, could affect the results when comparing the same issue in different sectors (e.g. tasks differences). Therefore the researcher believes that the education field represents an excellent environment for studying and comparing work behaviour issues because of the highly close tasks nature. Finally, in addition to contributing to the theory relative to organizational silence, Study 3 will also provide further validity evidence of the recently developed measurement tool's validity.

5 New scientific results

The research contributes to a better understanding of the silence phenomenon. It discussed the silence problem in public and private schools' environment. Thus, the similarity of the work tasks allows for better comparison between the public and private sector. This chapter summarizes the new scientific findings as follows.

1. The newly developed measurement tool is considered the first endeavour to measure the silence towards the decision-making process using a tool that developed for this purpose.
2. Correlating the silence to a specific problem when investigating the underlying motives contributed to identifying new motives directly related to participation in decisions, unlike the previous research, which studied the general silence motives.
3. The research confirms that there is a statistically more significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of organizational factors (Fear of Negative Reactions, Lack of Management, Abusing of Formal Authority) on the participation in the decision-making process of public schools than personal factors (Pro-social Factor, Lack of Self-esteem, Psychological Withdrawal). (H1-2-7)
4. The research confirms that there are no differences in respondents' responses regarding their gender and age. However, there is a significant difference regarding their age variable, so silence decreases as age increases in public schools. (H3)
5. The research confirms that there is a statistically more significant impact (at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of organizational factors (Fear of Negative Reactions, Mistrust, Abusing of Formal Authority and Injustice) on the decision-making process in the private schools than personal factors (mainly Pro-social Factor, Psychological Withdrawal and Deviant Silence). (H4-5-8)
6. The research confirms that there are differences in respondents' responses regarding their age and experiences, so silence decreases as age and experience increase in private schools. (H6)
7. The research confirms that there are statistically significant differences between the silence factors based on the sector variable. (H9)
8. The research confirms that there are statistically significant differences in silence degrees based on the sector in which teachers work. (H10)

6 Conclusion, limitation, and further work

The first phase of the study investigated the underlying motives and related factors of silence. The interviews revealed 55 motives for silence which are classified according to their main factors. Also, 26 decision-related situations were reported by the respondents. The interviews included question measures the sample's tendency to silence. 82% of the sample said they prefer to remain silent always, often, or sometimes.

The second phase focused on two main points. First, developing a measurement tool of silence towards the decisions. Second, measuring the size and impact of organizational silence on the

decision-making process in public schools in Amman. The Impact hypotheses have been accepted for: psychological withdrawal, fear of negative reactions, abuse of power, social relations factor, lack of management support, and low self-esteem. In contrast, the rest of the factors had no impact.

The third phase measures and tested the hypotheses in private schools. The results show that the silence problem exists with a medium degree in the study society. The results also show an impact of personal and organizational factors on teachers' participation in the decision-making process in private schools. Impact hypotheses have been accepted for injustice, psychological withdrawal, fear of negative reactions, mistrust, prosocial factor, abuse of formal authority and the deviant factor. In contrast, the rest of the factors had no impact.

Application and recommendation

The results show the impact of each personal and organizational factor so that decision-makers and stakeholders can sort them according to their importance. Thus, decision-makers could apply the results of the research in setting up a solid treatment plan to ensure the efforts are not wasted. The results also help those concerned with organizational development and rehabilitation programs, especially in the human resource departments, to understand an aspect of individual and organizational behaviour related to participation in the decision-making process. This study provides a reasonable basis for the organization in a critical area related to defining the organization's training and rehabilitation needs and helping set up training programs to fulfil these needs. It can also help in understanding and benefit from a priority plan for developing personal aspects and correcting organizational behaviours that cause silence, whether for administrative staff or teachers.

Moreover, the MOE could use the results to minimize this silence impact by bridging the divides between public and private sector schools. In other words, the MOE could utilize the results to bring the positive practices from each sector to help in improving the negative ones. For instance, effective recruitment practices used in private sector schools can minimize the impact of personal factors and organizational factors. Also, the training centre at the MOE could be more effective in solving work-related issues within the schools. The centre could develop more reliable training programs based on these results.

Alternatively, the study results are not limited to the schools' environment or particular sector institutions but can also be considered a testament to both public and private organizations in general. At least in Jordan and the countries with the same culture, since we focused on administrative and organizational behaviour and some factors related to the individuals' actions and culture.

Limitation and future work

Although this study contributed to our understanding of the silence problem, the statistical analysis showed that the factors explained only 40% and 37% of the change in participation in the decision-making process in both types of schools, respectively. Multiple reasons could have limited this. One of the primary reasons is, as mentioned previously, that a directive management style is used in Jordanian organizations generally; this style could nurture a sense of dependence, which in turn leads to an organizational culture of silence. Besides, this silence can affect the questionnaires' answers as well as the decision-making process. It could be argued that a shorter questionnaire and rewording some of the questions in future studies could solve this issue. Moreover, this study distributed questionnaires to the teachers alone and not the principals. This could block us from reaching accurate answers on motives that teachers do not want to talk about, especially personal ones that could lead to blame them. However, one of the studies that could be suggested is conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with Jordanian schools' principals. This could reveal more motives and details on the employees' silence from a different point of view. Thus, more details and motives could be revealed on the silence problem from different perspectives.

Own publications

- Alkhlaifat, Osama. 2017. "CAN ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE INHIBIT LEAN MANAGEMENT?" Pp. 153–66 in *GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN CENTRAL EUROPE*. Hungary: Alexandre Lámfalussy Faculty of Economics, University of Sopron.
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- Alkhlaifat, Osama, and Munif Alzoubi. n.d. "The Organizational and Human Silence Factors and Their Impact on the Decision-Making Process in the Public Schools." *Dirasat*.
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In processing:

GENDER INFLUENCE ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE IN THE SCHOOL SECTOR IN AMMAN, JORDAN. Accepted and waiting publishing. International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEAN MANAGEMENT APPLYING PROCESS. Accepted waiting for publishing. J. of Productivity and Quality Management

SILENCE IMPACT ON THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN AMMAN- Under review – waiting for the decision. Management Decision journal

THE IMPACT OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS OF SILENCE ON EMPLOYEES' SATISFACTION IN THE JORDAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. Under review – waiting for the decision. Journal of economy and society.