

# Organizational Silence, Fear of Failure and Employees' Performance in Kerman Hospitals, Iran

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## Abstract

**Background:** Employees' performance is important for management. The impact of components such as organizational silence and fear of failure have been reviewed in number of studies but we do not have any one in Kerman's hospitals. **Aim:** The aim of this research was to study the relationship between organizational silence, fear of failure and employees' performance at teaching hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of medical science 2014. **Materials and methods:** Data collection was performed using a three section questionnaire including 49 questions to measure the organizational silence, fear of failure and employees' performance. We analyzed data by SPSS 19 using multiple linear regression. **Results:** Positive correlation was found between organizational silence components (top management attitudes, supervisors' attitudes and communication opportunities) and employees' performance but no correlation was found between fear of failure components and employees' performance. The organizational silence determined employees' performance ( $b=0.453$ ). The fear of failure does not determine employees' performance. **Conclusion:** Depending on the environment and

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personality, employees have different performance. In this study we found that the current level of fear of failure has no significant correlation with employees' performance but organizational silence has significant direct correlation with it.

**Keywords:** Organizational Silence, Fear of Failure, Employees' Performance.

## Introduction

### *Background*

The efficiency and development of an organization depends on the proper deployment of human resources. Although, managers try to control their employees constantly but at the same time, they need new ideas; not only for service and production improvement, but also for coping with the rapid changes happening in the society (Moarefzadeh & Dehbozorgi, 2009). Organizations need people who share their information and who are respectful to their beliefs when facing challenges. The cooperation of employees who are believed to be the source of innovation, is vital for any organization success. Therefore, managers should look for employees who not only work with their hands but also with their minds, who tries to solve the problem and share their ideas.

"Organizational voice" as the ability of employees to express their opinions freely is one of the powerful sources for making changes in any organization (Perlow & Reppenning, 2009; Hazen, 2006). Lastly, organization silence is an inefficient process which can effect negatively on all aspects of an organization and indicate itself in different forms such as collective silence and low participation in new programs (Maria, 2006). However, personnel usually do not show any sign of interest to express their opinions, suggestions and problems about their working issues; and this is when "organizational silence" begins to happen. It is estimated that people usually become more nervous, resentful and even depressed when they do not succeed expressing their beliefs and emotions. They will lose their interest of working when perceiving their opinions are not useful or important for the

system (Perlow & Repenning, 2009). To avoid this phenomena, organizations need to create a reliable atmosphere which pay attention to employees concerns and fears.

Paying attention to employees concerns such as fear of failure and fear of change, creating a reliable atmosphere for personnel, causes the complete and especially intellectual appearance of employees. In such organizations, different issues which the organization faces will be solved more quickly and more comfortably. The organizations' structure must be in a way that makes it easy to contact top level managers (Kelley et al., 2012; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Greenberg et al., 2007). The truth about the today's managing methods is that the main decisions are made at the higher level of organizations, although shared decision making is shown to be important. Such organizations tend to refer to the people who have more similar ideas to the manager, so that they receive less negative feedbacks. This might be unconscious but it surely reflects the interest of dealing with people who think like each other (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Managers' fear of negative feedback from employees and Workers' opinion about managers' beliefs about them deteriorate organizational dynamics and might strengthen organizational silence (Slade, 2008). "Organizational silence" reduces decision making efficiency due to limiting data which decision makers need. New role of health care leaders places a high value on understanding system complexity and does not take comfort in organizational silence or in simple explanations (Henriksen & Dayton, 2006). Silence climate has an impact on organizations ability to detect errors and learn, therefore, organizational effectiveness is negatively affected.

Organizations are increasingly demanding more and more from their employees on taking initiative, speaking up and accepting responsibility because of more intensive competition, higher customer expectations, more focus on quality indicating a constant world of change (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). In a full-scale stimulation study in an anesthesia unit, speak up behaviors of nurses studied. In fact, the researchers studied the relation between speak up behaviors, i.e., questioning, correcting, specifying and teamwork performance. They noticed that speaking up improve better teamwork performance in simulated anesthesia inductions (Kolbe et al., 2012). Another study about organizational speak up by Lyndon et al. in childbirth units indicated that 12% of employees had no inclination toward speak up, despite of knowing that silence is detrimental for patients health (Lyndon et al., 2012).

### *Objectives*

In advance of conducting any task in the case of organization collaborative decision making improvement, it is necessary to estimate the preventive and other effective factors collected to study the relationship between organizational silence, fear of failure and employees' performance at teaching hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of Medical Science 2014

## **Materials and Method**

This descriptive-correlational study performed in 2014. Study population consisted of all employees working at teaching hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of Medical Sciences including Afzalipour, Shahid-Bahonar, Shafa and Shahid-Beheshti hospitals. The number of study population (the employees of studied hospitals) was 719, 700, 600 and 300, respectively. The sample size calculated using Cochran sampling formula. So, the sample size by attention to 95% confidence interval and degree of confidence equal to 0.05 estimated 386 persons.

The sampling performed using stratified simple sampling. So that, at the first, the employees stratified on the basis of field of work including financial, administrative and health care and type of employment including official, contract and temporary. Then, samples selected proportional to the strata size using simple randomize sampling.

Participants were assured that all of their information will remain confidential. All of the

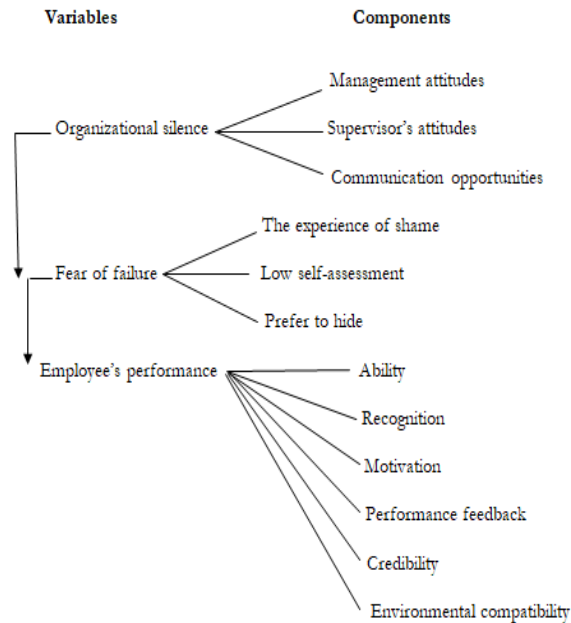
Participants studied and signed the form of conscious satisfaction designed by the research team.

Data collection performed using a three sections questionnaire containing 49 questions to measure the organizational silence, fear of failure and employee performance. Questionnaire scored according to Likert scale, so that the mean score of variables accounted on the basis of scores of 1-1.8 (very low), 1.8-2.6 (low), 2.6-3.4 (medium), 3.4-4.2 (high) and 4.2-5 devoted (very high).

Questionnaires validated using experts' judgments. So that, the statements of 10 faculty members about face validity and spelling of the questionnaire applied. Also, reliability of the questionnaires assessed using test-retest method. So that, the final questionnaire distributed in a sample of 20 persons of Afzalipour employees in 2 states with an interval of 10 days. Then using SPSS software, the correlation coefficient of the scores in 2 stages calculated. The correlation coefficient for job performance, organization silent and fear of failure questionnaire was 0.909, 0.877 and 0.909, respectively. Respective Data analysis was carried out using correlations and linear regression through SPSS 19. In order to better understand the overall concept of the study, we developed analytical framework of the relation between organizational silence, fear of failure and employees' performance at teaching hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of Medical Sciences which is shown in the figure 1.

## **Results**

Results of Spearman correlations indicated that there is positive correlation between organizational silence and employee's performance at teaching hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of Medical Sciences, but there is not any correlation between fear of failure and employee's performance (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Analytical framework of the relation between organizational silence, fear of failure and employees' performance at teaching hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of Medical Sciences 2014

$$\text{Employee's performance} = 2.148 + 0.205 * \text{communication opportunities} + 0.171 * \text{supervisor's attitudes to silence}$$

The organizational silence determined employee's performance (b=0.453). The fear of failure does not determine employee's performance.

$$\text{Employee's performance} = 1.969 + 0.453 * \text{Organizational silence}$$

386 subjects filled in questionnaires, 11(30%) of whom were male 270(70%) were female. 74.8% aged above 30, 35% aged between 30- 40 and 38.8% aged above 41 years old, 19.4% were single 80.8% were married. 36.2% had above 10 years' work experience and 85.5% were above diploma.

**Table 1.** Quantitative description of the research variables on the basis of hospitals

Hospital	Variable	Average	S.D	Number of questionnaires
Afzalepour	Employee's Performance	3.45	0.51	107
	Organizational silence	3.10	0.58	
	Fear of failure	2.07	0.70	
Shafa	Employee's Performance	3.29	0.51	88
	Organizational silence	2.98	0.65	
	Fear of failure	2.28	0.71	
Shahid-Beheshtee	Employee's Performance	3.34	0.56	90
	Organizational silence	3.10	0.63	
	Fear of failure	2.36	0.78	

	Fear of failure			
Shahid-Bahonar	Employee's Performance	3.28	0.57	101
	Organizational silence	2.98	0.64	
		2.33	0.66	
	Fear of failure			

Indicate that job performance variable and components of organizational support, performance feedback and credibility have high mean and components of ability, cognition, motivation and environmental compatibility have medium mean. Also, organizational silence and its components have medium mean and fear of failure variable and components of low self-assessment and hiding from important persons have low mean and shame experience component have medium mean.

**Table 2.** Spearman correlation coefficient between organizational silence, fear of failure and their components with employees' job performance

Variables		Correlation coefficient	p-value
<b>Organizational silence</b>	Management attitude to silence	0.461	<0.001
	Supervisor attitude to silence	0.315	<0.001
	Communication opportunities	0.482	<0.001
	Total organizational silence	0.538	<0.001
<b>Fear of failure</b>	Shame experience	0.043	0.404
	Low self-assessment	0.042	0.416
	Hiding from important persons	0.050	0.328
	Total Fear of failure	0.016	0.755

Because the variables are abnormal, so Spearman correlation coefficient used to study the relationship between fear of failure and job performance (Table 2). So, the Spearman correlation coefficient was -0.016 which indicate there is no significant relationship between fear of failure and job performance (p>0.05). As table 2 indicate, the subcomponents of fear of failure do not have a direct and significant relationship with job performance.

Regarding the relation between organizational silence, fear of failure and job performance in terms of different demographic characteristics, table 3 indicate the correlation between organizational silence and job performance is higher among women, 30-40 years' age group, people with diploma degree and job experience 10-20 years. Also there is no correlation between fear of failure and job performance in terms of different demographic characteristics

**Table 3.** Spearman correlation coefficient between organizational silence and job performance in terms of demographic characteristics

Mediator variable	Correlation between organizational silence and job performance		
	Spearman	P-value	Number

		correlation coefficient		
<b>Gender</b>	Male	0.404	<0.01	95
	Female	0.483	<0.01	248
<b>Age</b>	<30	0.229	0.03	90
	30-40	0.573	<0.01	134
	>41	0.495	<0.01	146
<b>Education</b>	Diploma	0.562	<0.01	53
	Associate	0.369	0.002	70
	Bachelor	0.514	<0.01	189
	MSc	0.235	0.116	46
	Ph.D.	0.289	0.53	7

<b>Job experience</b>	<10	0.327	<0.01	159
	10-20	0.581	<0.01	120
	21-30	0.482	<0.01	74

As demonstrated in table 2, there is significant correlation between organization silence (not fear of failure) and job performance. So in this step the ability of the components of organization silence to predict job performance variable is studied. Accordingly, analysis of variance the relation between the criterion variable (job performance) and predictor variable (organizational silence) indicate that organization silence components can predict job performance variable ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 4. Simultaneous regression results of organizational silence on job performance

Predictor variables		Not standardized coefficient		Beta standardized coefficient	T	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> (adj)
		B coefficient	Standard error						
constant		2.148	0.104	-	20.751	<0.01	0.523	0.274	0.270
<b>Organizational silence</b>	Communication opportunities	0.205	0.038	0.307	5.375	<0.01			
	Supervisor attitude	0.171	0.036	0.271	4.749	<0.01			

The regression equation used to predict exactly the amount of criterion variable (job performance). This equation is as below:

Job performance:  $2.148 + 0.205 \times \text{communication opportunities} + 0.171 \times \text{supervisor attitude to silence}$

The organizational silence determined employee's performance, but fear of failure did not determine employees' performance. The considered regression model is as follow:

Employee's performance =  $1.969 + 0.453 \times \text{Organizational silence}$ .

## Discussion

Descriptive results showed a low level of fear of failure (ranged from 1.8 to 2.6). So employees do everything that is necessary to progress organization and organizational goals have great important for them. This result is supported by thirteenth Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report 2011. On the basis of this report, a low level of fear of failure and taking risks are necessary for job progress (Kelley et al., 2012). Also, Robbins stated that low level of stress or fear of failure improves the employees' performances but continuous stress or high level stress has a negative effect on them (Robbins et al., 2013).

In this study, an average level of organizational silence observed (ranged from 2.6 to 3.4 in different hospitals). This finding is supported by Danaee-Fard study in the medical universities located in Tehran (Iran university=2.96, Tehran university=2.96, Shahid-Beheshti university=3.03) (Danaee et al., 2011). This mean level of organizational silence highlights the fact that employees did not feel free to express their views about different aspects of hospital management and organization, so they don't support change and organization development (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The possible reasons for this mean level of organizational silence can be explained by these theories:

1. The result of past performance in efficient causal principle theory of skinner's.
2. Victor Vroom's expectations Theory, the result of comparison and comprehension people is important.
3. Spiral of silence Neumann's theory as an attempt to explain in part how public opinion is formed. She wondered why the people supported wrong political positions that led to national defeat (Robbins et al., 2013).

Our study indicated that employees' performance was at a high level (ranging from 3.4 to 4.2). This is a good news for hospital authorities, since it shows the managerial style (for which organizational silence level is a component), has been successful.

We found a positive correlation between gender and performance like Ekrami et al (Nazari et al., 2014). and despite of Haghghat-Monfared (Haghghat et al., 2010). Also, despite Afghani who found no correlation between organizational silence and age (Afkhani Ardakani & Mehrabanfar, 2015), this research found the most organizational silence in 30-40 years people.

## Conclusion

It was assumed that employees' performance will be decreased with increase in silence and fear of failure, but this did not happen in the current study. One reason may be because of some employees working with internal personal motivation and try to protect patients' life despite the presence of middle organizational silence. So, it was concluded that different factors can effect on increase or decrease of employees' performance, in which employees' silence is not believed to be a negative factor. It means that not only the employees' silence in hospitals affiliated with Kerman University of Medical Sciences is not considered as a negative factor, but also this amount of silence has been able to improve job performance of employees. It is possible that some equalizing factors - which the researcher did not have control on - such as personality factors, culture and organizational atmosphere

and the attitude of employees to the job environment, have had different effects on the result. Probably, the special conditions of hospital employees and their role in patients' life have effects on their performance.

To prevent increase in negative organizational silence, it is proposed that meetings be arranged with employees and the results of employees' proposals and ideas to be informed to them (correct and complete communication). Also, the role of managers and supervisors to overcome the fear of failure is very important, so that they can be effective in reducing improper and destructive stress through ensuring the inevitability of mistakes.

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