

## Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences Review (JERSSR)

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### Exploring the Levels and Reasons of Organizational Silence of Secondary School

#### Teachers of Punjab Pakistan

1. Dr. Deeba Imdad Visiting Lecturer, Institute of Education, University of Sargodha  
Email: [deebaimdad@gmail.com](mailto:deebaimdad@gmail.com)
  2. Dr. Sahibzada Shamim-ur-Rasool Assistant Professor, Institute of Education, University of Sargodha  
Email: [shamim.rasool@uos.edu.pk](mailto:shamim.rasool@uos.edu.pk)
  3. Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Malik Associate Professor, Institute of Education, University of Sargodha  
Email: [mushtaq.ahmad@uos.edu.pk](mailto:mushtaq.ahmad@uos.edu.pk)
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#### Abstract



*This research study aimed to investigate the impact of organizational silence on the performance of secondary school teachers. It sought to examine how the phenomenon of organizational silence, wherein teachers consciously withhold their opinions, ideas, or concerns, influences their professional performance. The main objective of the study was to identify the level of organizational silence among secondary school teachers, explore the causes of organizational silence among secondary school teachers. The study was delimited to the secondary schools in Punjab province. Head-teachers, secondary school teachers and secondary school students were the unit of analysis and hence forth constituted the population of study. Data were collected through cross sectional survey and interviews. Multistage sampling technique was used to get the required number of respondents as sample. Data collected from randomly selected 446 secondary school teachers, analyzed by running SPSS. Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data, moreover inferential statistics also used such as t-test. The results indicated that among secondary school teachers in Punjab, there was evidence of a moderate level of organizational silence. However, the study did not uncover any significant impact of organizational silence on the performance of secondary school teachers. The p-value did not support the null hypothesis, which stated that there was no statistically significant influence of organizational silence on the performance of secondary school teachers.*

**Keywords:** Organization, Silence, Secondary Schools

#### Introduction

Development of effective communication skills is one of the purposes of education at all levels, because every living thing has an innate drive to interact with other living things and exchange or share ideas or information through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviors (Stamatis, & Papanikolaou 2015). Therefore, the value of communication cannot be overstated because everyone must regularly communicate with others to discuss issues, need support in decision making (Ghosh, 2022). The success of any organization specifically and an individual particularly, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) emphasized the development of creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. With reference to P21, Anwar (2020) narrated that communication is referred to understand things well and sharing them clearly with others. Sharing means passing out ideas, information, feelings, and thoughts about a problem or issue under discussion. It helps to promote social cohesion and understanding by fostering respect for diversity and fostering a sense of shared identity.

By sharing ideas and knowledge can help the organizational head or group leader gain an in-depth understanding of resolving an issue and related tasks. Therefore, sharing is assumed a vital aspect of any relationship, whether it's between individuals, groups, or organizations. Sharing of information and ideas can be formal or informal, verbal, or nonverbal, and can take place through various channels such as face-to-face, phone, email, or social media. In their study, Lekhawipat et al (2018) contended that sharing of ideas or information is essential for personal, social, and organizational betterment and moreover is crucial for building a just and equitable organizational

environment. It is also important for taking better decisions, organizational development, and creating a pleasant working environment. Sharing ideas within an organization is essential for the growth and success of the organization. It allows for the collective intelligence of all employees to be utilized, leading to more innovative and effective solutions to problems. When individuals feel comfortable sharing their ideas, they are more likely to be engaged and invested in the success of the organization (Ipe, 2003).

One can define silence as a negative word because it can highlight the introvert attitudes and such psychological attitudes which show introvert kind of nature of different characters who live in a society, but philosophy takes the word silence as a very positive word and full of positive rays (Afsar, 2013).

Employees sometimes have some innovative and useful ideas so that they could enhance the capability of the organization but sometimes they suggest these ideas to their concerned higher authority and the other time they prefer to keep silence (Cinar et al., 2013). This official silence is meant for the protection of the organization so that no competitor can change the plans or ideas (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). This silence is an important topic and has been discussed publicly (Karaca, 2013). Silence is an organizational phenomenon and the managers must eradicate its major sources (Valikhani & Karpardaz, 2015).

Silence does not mean quietness it demands total absence of the employees physically, intellectually and emotionally (Nikmaram et al., 2012). They also provide silent behavior in other circumstances like when they have to share knowledge, they have to brainstorm collectively, identify different problems, find out possible solutions and in some cases, they have to create other problems and find out their solutions. If they do not have solutions, they can try to find those solutions so that they can provide a better solution to the problems (Karaca, 2013).

Voice and silence are two opposite concepts. Silence eradicates the speaking power whereas the voice includes the speaking power (Zaman, et al., 2021). Brinsfield et al. (2020) described that voice provides different ideas, words, imaginations, information, suggestions and concerns. On the other hand, silence creates a barrier between all these so that these elements cannot be shown to the public. Voice is less critical because it promotes the status and it is more creative in its nature. Voice provides different ways for improvements and provides different ways to enhance its standards (Mowbray et al., 2015). But it is a well-known fact that voice costs for others and it is completely risky (Hsiung, 2012).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the current endeavor were to:

- i. Identify the levels of organizational silence among secondary school teachers.
- ii. Examine the current status of organizational silence among secondary school teachers with respect to their gender.
- iii. Examine the current status of organizational silence among secondary school teachers with respect to their nature of job.
- iv. Explore the reasons behind the organizational silence of secondary school teachers in Punjab.

### **Hypotheses of Study**

Ho: There is no organizational silence among secondary school teachers.

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in organizational silence score of teachers by gender

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in organizational silence score of teachers by their job nature

### **Methodology**

In present research quantitative data was required to explore silence behavior of teachers. Descriptive research, according to Williams, (2007), the research in which characteristics of variable are described in a certain situation. The nature of study was descriptive because researcher used to describe the silence behavior of teachers using distinct characteristics of descriptive research such as collection of quantifiable information, nature of behavior is not manipulatable, and collection of data at one point in time. Moreover, to describe the status of variable under study i.e. "Organizational Silence" within education setting, data were collected by cross sectional survey technique, organized, tabulated, and interpreted in line with the steps of descriptive research.

**Population of study**

- i. All the male and female secondary school teachers of public sector secondary schools of Punjab Province

**Sampling of the Study**

The study was to explore the extent to which the secondary school teachers are silent in their organization. It was survey research in nature.

**Step-1:** According to Economic Survey Pakistan (2021), Punjab province constitute nine divisions and researcher selected one district from each division randomly. In this way, nine districts were selected randomly.

**Step-2:** In selected nine districts, there were 1650 (i-e 850 boys & 800 girls) public secondary schools, out of which 171 (10%) were randomly selected including 91 (10%) boys and 80 (10%) girls. List of schools were taken from School Education Department (SED) website (2021).

The respondents' i-e secondary school teachers were taken through a census sampling technique. Census is an attempt to get information from all respondents (head teachers) included in each sampled school. In this way 171 (i-e 91 males and 80 females) head teachers were participated in this study.

**Step-4:** In selected nine districts, there were 4460 (i-e 2750 males & 1710 females) secondary school teachers out of which 446 (10%) were randomly selected including 275 (10%) male and 171 (10%) female. List of schools were taken from School Education Department (SED) website (2021).

**Research Tool**

To measure the organizational silence a questionnaire was developed based on organizational silence scale constructed by Dasci & Cemaloglu (2016). Researcher made some modification with respect to Pakistani cultural context and background of respondents. The final questionnaire comprised seven factors such as i-e Relationship with heads (10 items), relationship with colleagues (8 items), individual practices (8 items), and organizational culture (5 items), subordinate's fear of negative feedback (5 items), lack of communication opportunities (4 items) and pressure groups (5 items) were included. The Likert scale was used to measure the level of organizational silence among secondary school teachers ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

**Findings and Results**

**Table 1**

*Levels of Organizational Silence*

Levels	Mean Range	Frequency	Percent	Overall Mean score	SD
Very low	1.00-1.80	23	5.2%	2.99	0.76
Low	1.81-2.60	59	13.2%		
Medium	2.61-3.40	268	60.1%		
High	3.41-4.20	92	20.6%		
Very high	4.21-5.00	4	0.9%		
Total		446	100%		

Table depicts that 60% of secondary school teachers (mean = 2.99 and SD = 0.76) perceived medium level of organizational silence in their organizations,13% of secondary school teachers showed low level of organizational silence. 20% of the teachers showed high level of organizational silence in their schools. 5.2% of the teachers showed very low level of organizational silence and only 0.9% teachers' response was tended towards very high level of organizational silence in their schools. Overall mean score shows that in most of the public secondary school teachers were perceived medium level of organizational silence.

**Table 2**

Descriptive statistics of level of organizational silence in secondary schools

Indicators	Mean	SD	Level
1. Relationship with Head	3.17	.78	Medium
2. Relationship with colleagues	3.25	.89	Medium
3. Individual Practices	2.95	.68	Medium
4. Organizational culture	3.05	.80	Medium
5. Subordinate fear of negative reactions	2.27	.87	Low
6. Lack of communication opportunities	3.60	1.04	High
7. Pressure groups	2.67	.84	Medium
Overall level of organizational silence among secondary school teachers	2.99	0.84	Medium

Table summarizes the indicator wise level of organizational silence perceived by the secondary school teachers. In the light of criteria (table-4.1), the level of organizational silence in

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connection to the “relationship with head” (M =3.17), “relationship with colleagues” (M =3.25), “individual practice” (M=2.95), “organizational culture” (M=3.05), and “pressure groups” (M=2.67) was found to be “medium”. While the level of organizational silence in connection to “subordinate fear of negative feedback” (M=2.27) was found to be “low” and “lack of communication opportunities” (M=3.60) was found to be “high”.

On the basis of set criteria (table-4.1), the overall M = 2.99 & SD = 0.84 indicated that the level of organizational silence in secondary schools of Punjab was found to be “medium”.

**Table 3**

*Frequency and percentage of organizational silence in secondary schools by gender*

Gender	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Total
Male	18 6.5%	38 13.8%	148 53.8%	67 24.4%	4 1.5%	275 100%
Female	5 2.9%	21 12.3%	120 70.2%	25 14.6%	0 0.0%	171 100%
Total	23 5.2%	59 13.2%	268 60.1%	92 20.6%	4 0.9%	446 100%

Table shows the comparison views of male and female public secondary school teachers in Punjab province about the level of organizational silence. 70.2% female secondary school teachers showed medium level of organizational silence While 53.8% male secondary school teachers showed medium level of organizational silence. The overall frequency and percentage shows that most of the female secondary school teachers showed more medium level (70.2%) level as compared to male secondary school teachers (53.8%) in Punjab province.

**Table 3A**

*T-test of teachers’ organizational silence in secondary schools by gender*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value
Male	275	131.01	27.97	.636	418.3	.012
Female	171	133.49	22.21			

Table shows significant difference in score of organizational silence of male (M= 131.01, SD = 27.97) to female (M= 133.49, SD = 22.21) and  $t_{(444)} = .636$ ,  $p < 0.12$  indicated that the null hypothesis “there is no statistically significant difference in organizational silence score by gender” is rejected.

It means the organizational silence in secondary schools by gender in the Punjab province was existed. Furthermore, female secondary school teachers with a greater mean score (M=133.49) show a higher level of organizational silence as compared to male secondary school teachers with mean score (M = 131.01), which means female secondary school teachers observe high silence than their counterparts.

**Table 4.12.1**

*Percentage and frequency of teachers’ organizational silence by their nature of job*

Nature of Job	Lowest	Low	Medium	High	Highest	Total
Regular	23 6.2%	44 11.9%	219 59.2%	80 21.6%	4 1.1%	370 100%
Contract	0 0.0%	15 19.7%	49 64.5%	12 15.8%	0 0.0%	76 100%
Total	23 5.2%	59 0.0%	268 60.1%	92 20.6%	4 0.9%	446 100%

Table 4.12.1 shows the comparison of level of organizational silence with respect to the nature of job of teachers. 59.2% of regular secondary school teachers and 64.5% of contractual secondary school teachers observed medium level of organizational silence. The overall frequency and percentage shows that majority (64.5%) contractual secondary school teachers showed medium level of organizational silence as compared to regular secondary school teachers.

**Table 4.12.2**

*T-test for organizational silence in secondary schools by teacher’s nature of job*

Job Nature	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Regular	370	130.24	26.31	1.57	444	.118
Contract	76	135.47	23.53			

Table 4.12.2 shows that there is no significant difference in mean score of organizational silence of regular teacher ( $M = 130.24$ ,  $SD = 26.31$ ) to contractual teachers ( $M = 135.47$ ,  $SD = 23.53$ ) and  $t = 1.57$  and  $p = .118 > 0.05$  indicated that the null hypothesis “there is no statistically significant difference in organizational silence score of teachers by their job nature” is accepted.

Hence, statistically, nature of job of secondary school teachers has no relation to the observance of silence. However, the mean score of secondary school teachers working on regular ( $M = 130.24$ ) is less than contractual ( $M = 135.47$ ). It means tendency of observance of organizational silence among contractual is more than regular secondary school teachers.

### Conclusions

- i. It was concluded that the prevalence of organizational silence among secondary school teachers in secondary schools of Punjab was at medium level. Moreover, among all the districts, Okara district exhibited the highest level of silence among teachers.
- ii. It was concluded that the majority of female secondary school teachers tend to withhold their point of view and observe a high level of silence compared to their male counterparts.
- iii. In concern to reasons of silence among teachers, it was concluded that the majority of secondary school teachers stated that corrosive behavior of heads, avoidance of conflicts with heads and colleagues, and considering their voice ineffective compels them to remain silent. On the other hand, the majority of head teachers stated that teachers recognize their primary responsibility is to execution of their teaching tasks and other academic responsibilities. They perceived that sharing their voice on administrative and academic matters might divert their attention from their primary teaching responsibilities. Head teachers further viewed that teachers are commitment to their profession, display dedication, and a sense of duty toward their teaching work. Their diligent work ethic ensures good performance, even if they choose to withhold their opinions on school issues.

### Discussion

This study enriches the existing body of research on exploring the teachers' organizational silence within the education sector. By withholding ideas, teachers miss out on valuable feedback, support, and guidance from experienced educators and educational administrators. Additionally, a lack of idea-sharing undermines the development of a supportive and inclusive work environment, diminishing morale and job satisfaction. Without open dialogue and the sharing of ideas, teachers may feel isolated and disengaged, leading to decreased motivation and ultimately impacting the quality of their teaching. Furthermore, silence behavior has significant implications for individual cognition and emotional experiences, including job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, organizational commitment, job burnout, and turnover intention (Wang & Liu, 2017; Whiteside & Barclay, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore the current status of organizational silence among secondary school teachers in secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan. The major objective was to identify the level of silence, reasons of silence and assess its impact on teachers' performance. By investigating silence among teachers, the research sought to provide insights into the dynamics of silence and its implications for the teaching-learning environment in secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan.

The research findings indicated that there was a moderate level of organizational silence among teachers in secondary schools throughout Punjab. Among all the districts, Okara stood out with the highest level of silence among teachers. In concerned of moderate level of silence the finding is in line the study conducted by Kose & Kose (2019) in which they analysis the teachers' perception about organizational silence. However, in the case of the Okara district, the findings raise questions and are deemed crucial to delve deeper into the reasons behind this heightened silence.

This study also focused on the exploration of organizational silence among teachers in connection to number of demographic variables, such as gender and nature of job. The research findings did not yield statistically significant results, indicating that no clear and conclusive differences were observed among some of the demographic characteristics. Research survey results revealed that a significant number of female secondary school teachers experience a higher level of silence compared to their male counterparts, the findings align with previous research (Fapohunda, 2016; Gulsum, et al., 2016; Bastug). Rosen and Tesser (2014) proposed that women tend to be more hesitant and reluctant to engage in discussions compared to their male counterparts (Rosen & Tesser, 2014). Based on the findings, it was observed that men tend to exhibit a more passive approach in expressing their opinions while simultaneously displaying a higher degree of proactive silence.

Previous studies have suggested various reasons, including cultural and social norms, lack of empowerment, and gender inequalities within educational settings. These outcomes can be examined within the framework proposed by Jackson et al. (2014), which suggests that gender-related disparities in social expectations and idea expression may contribute to variations in organizational silence across genders (Jackson et al., 2014). Notably, emotional differences between men and women have been documented. Women are more inclined to exhibit passive negative emotions (Brody & Hall, 2010), whereas men often respond with active emotional reactions and aggression (Kring & Gordon, 1998). It is important to note that this study did not specifically analyze these emotional differences, which could be considered in future research.

The findings of this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between natures of the job with regard to the observance of silence in schools. Findings are contradictory to the conclusions drawn by Ufartiene, Brusokaite and Widelska (2020) in their study about relationship between organizational silence and employee demographic characteristics: the case of Lithuanian teachers. However, the findings supported by Nikkhah, & Bayat (2021) study in which they suggested that job nature may not be the primary drivers of silence in schools.

### **Recommendations**

- i. A medium level of organizational silence was revealed in this study. While literature explicated that organizational silence is in any case destructive to both employees and organizations in terms of performance. To break the silence in schools, it is therefore, recommended that school heads may eliminate the reasons for silence and may create a welcoming atmosphere in school where teachers feel at ease to freely express their opinions without any fear and feel confident that his/her voice is valued and respected.
- ii. In current study, female teachers were found to remain more silent than males, therefore, it is recommended that female head teachers may mentor and support teachers to express her ideas confidently. Female head teachers may create open feedback channels where female teachers can provide anonymous feedback and suggestions. This may be allowed female teachers to share their thoughts without fear of repercussions.

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