THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE SILENCE ON WORK-FAMILY ENRICHMENT AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG EMPLOYEES OF TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Employee silence has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners in recent times. When employees intentionally withhold potential input and useful information by displaying silence, organisations are deprived access to useful resource that may help garner a competitive advantage. Withholding ideas and inputs on critical success issues is a serious impediment not only to the organisation, but also to the employee's physical and mental well-being. Access to valuable information improves work and possibly working conditions that in turn affect other domains other than work. Thus, this study investigates the effects that the employee intentional withholding of organisationally relevant information has on the family work domain of employees in the tertiary education institutions of the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Data was collected from 228 married employees using self-administered questionnaires. IBM SPSS Statistics and SmartPLS 3 were used to analyse the data. The findings reveal that employee silence has a significant negative relationship on work-family enrichment and no significant relationship on work-family conflict. The implications of the study and directions for future research are suggested.

Keywords: Silence, work-family enrichment, work-family conflict, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Converging social and ideological trends at the beginning of the new millennium suggest that work-family issues will become increasingly important (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Employees are crucial in addressing and solving the problems that arise as a result of the complexities of today's organisational environments. Withholding ideas and inputs on critical success issues is a serious impediment not only to the organisation, but also to the employee's physical and mental well-being. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) posited that work experiences and family experiences can have additive effects on well-being.

Research has pointed to the unwillingness of most employees in providing clues and headlights in solving the problems and issues that arise in the workplace (Detert & Burris, 2007; Elizabeth Wolfe Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Most often, employees are reluctant to share information for the fear of the unknown, and when asked to provide such, they felt insecure (Deniz, Noyan, & Ertosun, 2013). The feeling of insecurity and apprehension to share divergent views with management or co-workers had lead employees not to speak up. (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003)

Employee silence is extremely detrimental to organisations (Bagheri, Zarei, & Aeen, 2012). Withholding of organisationally relevant information affects both performance and employee morale, so the consequences may be significant (Morrison, 2014). Research has shown that employees are very hesitant to engage in voice, particularly when the recipient could view the information as negative or threatening (Detert, Burris, & Harrison, 2010). In situations where employees are faced with the choice of whether or not to raise an issue, employees often choose to remain silent (Morrison & See, 2014). Up 85% of employees in a study reported instances when they had failed to speak up about something of concern (Milliken et al., 2003).

Employee silence has numerous effects on the employees themselves. Indifferent employees, often products of ignored employee silence, tend to feel like cogs at machinery factories (Beheshtifar, Hossein, & Moghadam, 2012). Employee silence also affects the personal well-being of employees. It increases stress and causes them to feel guilty, where they often experience psychological problems and have

trouble seeing the possibility of change (Bagheri et al., 2012).

The effects of withholding and non-sharing of ideas on critical organisational matters by employees invariably intersect and interfere with their non-work life. The spill over effect may be disastrous. WFE was found to be positively related to employee voice (Zhang, Zhou, Wang, & Cone, 2011). Could the opposite be with employee silence? There has been a suggestion for the integration of the literature on employee voice and silence (Morrison, 2011). At present, the literatures on voice and silence have sometimes run parallel and at other times intersected (Morrison, 2014).

There have been separate research studies on employee silence, work-family enrichment and conflict by scholars. However, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the effects of employee silence on the work–family enrichment and conflict. Literature is virtually absent on the effects of employee silence on work family interface. Not much is known as to the impact of employee silence on these family domains. No known study so far addresses the problem in the Nigerian context. This study, therefore, attempts to fill the gap by exploring the effects of silence on the work-family enrichment and work-family enrichment of employees at tertiary educational institutions of the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed to explore the effects of employee's silence behaviours at work on their work-family enrichment and work-family conflicts.

Accessible literatures were analysed, and a simple model develop to test the relationship. SmartPLS 3 software was used statistically to test the effect of employee silence on work family enrichment.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Employee Silence

The term employee silence is a recent construct (Morrison, 2014). The construct emerged in the organisational behaviour literature with the publication of Morrison & Milliken's (2000) conceptual paper on organisational silence. It refers to not speak up when one has a suggestion, concern and information about a problem, or a divergent point of view that could be useful or relevant to share (Milliken et al., 2003). It also includes not writing, not being present, negative attitude, not being heard and being ignored (Deniz & Noyan, 2013). Silence also includes "quieting, censorship,

suppression, trivialization, exclusion, ghettoization and other forms of discounting" (Hazen & Hazen, 2006).

Employee silence is a multifaceted concept that involves but is not limited to, lack of speech or formal voice; in fact, it may occur in the midst of sound or language. Employee silence can occur simultaneously with either sound or speech: it is not necessarily the opposite of either (Pinder & Harlos, 2001).

Silence being a vague concept can take different meanings depending on the context within which the concept is employed (Brown & Coupland, 2005). The concept is elusive, complex and multidimensional in nature (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003) and yet, also pervasive in organisations (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). The complexity of silence goes beyond what the word seems to stand for. Silence can be an act of communication in itself, involving a range of cognitions, emotions, or intentions, such as an endorsement or objection (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). The silence starts when we choose not to confront a difference (Perlow & Williams, 2003). Individuals would limit the spread of bad news as far as possible or simply choose to remain silent because they do not want to become bad news

communicators for the negative message (J. Lu & Xie, 2013).

The intentional withholding of any form of information, as long as that information is relevant to the job may constitute employee silence (Brinsfield, 2009). Being silent about issues and problems at work has been a common experience among employees most especially when the issue at stake has a potential negative outcomes and risks. Employees may withhold ideas for improvement, concerns about witnessing ethical breaches, information which might be harmful to a co-worker if it was revealed, or something a co-worker needs to know to do their job effectively (Milliken et al., 2003). According to Argyris (1977) there are dominant norms and defensive routines within organisations that often prevent employees from saying what they know. Other scholars noted that organisations are often intolerant of criticism and dissent, and that employees may withhold information in order to not 'rock the boat' or create conflict (Ewing, 1977; Redding, 1985; Sprague and Rudd, 1988).

The virtues of upward communication for organisational health has been extolled by scholars over time (Argyris & Schon, 1978). The extent to which

employees communicate upward with suggestions, ideas, information about problems or issues of concern can have tremendous implications for an organisation's performance and even its survival (Morrison, 2011). However, silence has remained the common choice by most organisation members (Deniz & Noyan, 2013). The culture of inconsistent treatment of employees, administrative issues, cultural issues, values and norms, as well as fear of management power, are among the causes of silence (Deniz & Noyan, 2013). Since silence is an inefficient process that can negatively impact all facets of an organisation and manifest itself in various forms (Maria, 2006), it effects on the other domains outside work is an anticipated expectation. Hence, we hypothesised that:

H1: There is a negative relationship between employee silence and work-family enrichment.

Work-family enrichment

Work-family enrichment focuses on the generation and application of resources gained through participating in work and family roles that, when applied, result in improved performance or positive affect (mood) in the other role (Carlson et al., 2006). Work can provide resource gains that enhance performance in the family domain Carlson et al., 2006). It is concerned with the resources gained through work experience that are transferred to family life, resulting in either increased performance or positive affect in the family role, and it looks at family experiences that translate to increased performance or effect at work.

The work role has been shown to improves the quality of life other roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Several studies have found relationships between work-family facilitation and individual health (Stoddard & Madsen, 2007). Additives effects and transfer of positive experiances between domains are the positive consequences of WFE. However, work demands that have negative consequences are also likely to affect WFE in a negative form.

Work-family conflict

Work-family conflicts are common among workers (Kelly, Moen, & Tranby, 2011). Work–family conflict is one type of inter role conflict in which role pressures of the work and family domains involve some level of mutual incompatibility (Nielson, Carlson, & Lankau, 2001). It is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures of the work and family domains are

mutually incompatible in some respect. That is; participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Recent studies validated that work–family conflict is multidimensional with effects occurring from the work domain as well as from the family domain (Nielson et al., 2001). The focus of this study is on work interference with family.

Both work and family domains have their demands and problems, and can result in either work interfering with family life, or vice versa (Y. Lu, 2007). Studies have found relationships between work-family conflict and adverse health outcomes as well as (Stoddard & Madsen, 2007). Major et al. (2002) found significant correlations between work-family conflict and somatic complaints, as well as depression. Madsen, John, and Miller (2005) on the other hand, found a significant relationship between higher employee perceptions of both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict and their perceptions of personal mental and physical health. These studies present evidence that work-family conflict has an unfavourable effect on employees. (Stoddard & Madsen, 2007)

As an individual's relationships with others can have a significant influence on the work–family conflict (Nielson et al., 2001). The negative outcomes of silence on employee life are numerous. Hence, we hypothesised that:

H2 There is a positive relationship between employee silence and work-family conflict.

3. METHODS

Non-probability purposive sampling was used in this study. Data was collected using an adopted self-administered quantitative questionnaires developed and validated by earlier studies. One of the researchers personally administered the questionnaires. A total of 500 questionnaires was issued out to respondents. 363 questionnaires were returned, containing usable data. Of the 363 respondents who returned the usable questionnaires, 228 fit the selection criteria of being married before inclusion in this study. The minimum sample based on G*power 3.1.9.2 required for this study with two indicators calculated was 104 respondents.

There were 73 (32%) females and 155 males (68%) respondents in this study. The respondents' age ranges from 20 years to over sixty years; the mean age was 29 years. The length of service put in by the

respondents ranges from less than a year to above 30 years. About two-third of the respondents were non-teaching staff (66.4%). The remaining 33.6% were academic staff.

Instruments

Silence was measured using Brinsfield (2009) seven-point Likert scale. Example items include "I frequently remain silent at work: To avoid conflict, Due to negative experiences I have had in speaking up; because I was instructed not to speak up" etc.). It has the Cronbach's α reliability scale of 0.965. A higher score indicates silence.

Work-family conflict was measured using Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2006) 5-point Likert scale. Sample items include "My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like" and "The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities". It has a Cronbach α of 0.947.

Work-family enrichment was also measured using Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2006) 5-point Likert scale.

Sample items include "my involvement in my work helps me to understand different viewpoints, and this helps me be a better family. My involvement in my work helps me gain knowledge, and this helps me be a better family member", etc. It has a Cronbach α of 0.905.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Data for this study was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 and SmartPLS 3 software.

Construct validity

To measure how well the results obtained from the use of the measures employed fit the theories around which the test were designed, the discriminant and convergent validity were assessed. The Fornell- Larcker criterion and the examination of cross-loadings are the dominant approaches employed in the evaluation of discriminant validity in a variance-based structural equation modelling (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). The Fornell-Larcker Criterion and the cross-loadings obtained from the SmartPLS version 3demostrated the validity of the constructs:

Discriminant Validity

Table 1 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Silence	WFC	WFE
Silence	0.81		
WFC	0.15	0.909	
WFE	-0.24	-0.35	0.81

Analysis of the respective loadings and cross loadings shows no problem with any particular item going by the cutoff value of 0.5 as significant (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). All the items are measuring a construct loaded high on it and loaded very low on the other construct; this confirms construct validity in this study.

Convergent validity

The convergent validity was assessed following the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2010). The loading of factors, composite reliability and average variance extracted were all above the threshold recommended. All the items factor loadings exceeded the 0.5 values as recommended (Hair et al., 2010). The composite reliabilities were 0.96 for silence, 0.97 for work-family conflict and 0.928 for work-family enrichment. The recommended value is 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). The average variance extracted were greater than the 0.50 recommended by Barclay, Higgins and Thompson (1995). The constructs AVE's were 0.65 for silence, 0.81 for WFC and 0.65 for WFE.
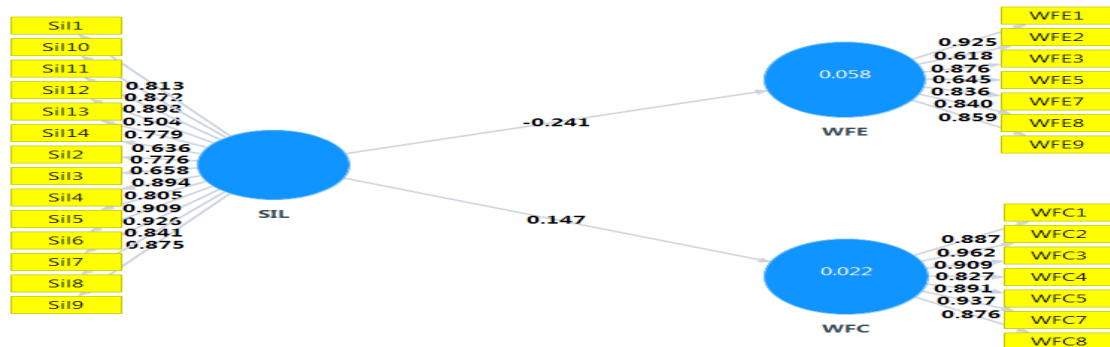

Fig1: The model

The measurement model was evaluated in the first instance and then the structural model was evaluated in the second instance. The relations between manifest variables (observed items) and latent variables (factors) were the issues evaluated in the measurement model. The evaluation of the measurement model was conducted by the assessment of validity and reliability of the construct measures in the model. The essence was to ensure that only reliable and valid constructs' measures were used for the assessment of the nature of relationships in the overall model as suggested by (Hulland, 1999).

Structural model

The relationships between the constructs modelled are evaluated here. Since the objective of PLS is to maximize the variance explained rather than fit, therefore prediction-oriented measures such as R2 are used to evaluate PLS models (Chin, 1998). The bootstrapping procedure of 5000 subsamples was applied based on the recommendations of Hair (2011) to the result of the measurement model obtained. The result so obtained is presented below:
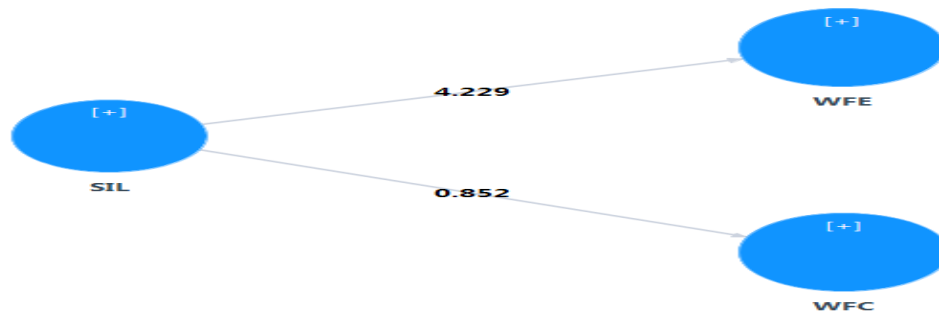

Fig 2: The structural model

The statistics obtained is tabulated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Standard Error	t Statistics	p Values	Decision
Sil -> WFC	0.18	0.87	0.38	Not supported
Sil -> WFE	0.06	4.19	0.00	Supported

The path analysis presented in the table above shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between employee silence and WFC. The R^2 of this path was

0.023, it β = 0.153, t = 0.871 and the pvalue = 0.384. The hypothesis formulated is therefore not supported because it is not significant. Employee silence to WFE has an

5.   DISCUSSION

This study focused on the effect of employee silence on WFE and WFC. The results obtained show a negative relationship between employee silence and WFE. This is consistent with our expectations as employee silence have been shown to affect both performance and employee morale (Olson, 2014), it was also being found to decrease psychological well-being of employees (Budd, 2013). WFE has also been linked negatively to decreased morale and psychological well-being (Lewis, 2010). Employee silence manifest a way that it draws a lot of energy from the employee (Cheng, Chang, Kuo, & Lu, 2014) thereby affecting the way the employee harness the potentials of his/her other domains.

The results also showed that employee silence has no significant effect on WFC. This relationship was unexpected. The destructive role of employee silence have been highlighted (Beheshtifar, Hossein, & Moghadam, 2012). Work-family conflict have also been shown to give rise to different emotional reactions (Illies, De

R^2 of 0.059, β = -0.243, t = 4.289 and the p value = 0.000 indicating the expected significant negative relationship between employee silence and WFE.

Pater, & Lim, 2012), leading to an employee's difficulty to balance the demands of the various role domains. The results in this study, therefore, point to the exclusion of the destructive role of employee silence on WFC.

Implication

From our results, it was established that employee silence is negatively related to WFE. This implies that the more organisation managers make effort in break silence, the more an employee gain and transfer benefit from the work domain to his family domain. The opposite occurs when silence atmosphere is created in the work place. The psychological effect of such will impact negatively on the employee's WFE.
 The role of employees in organisational success has been highlighted. The readiness of employees to come up with useful ideas and suggestions on the best way forward needs to be encouraged and supported. Conducive atmosphere for expression of divergent ideas and opinions should be upheld and encouraged by organisational

managers. Negative consequences of providing useful information to both colleagues and management should be done away with so as to allow organisations to reap the full benefits of work-family interaction. Doing away with instances of employee intentional withholding information should be the target of every manager.

Limitation

There are several limitations regarding this study. First, data were collected from sample institutions in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria and generalized for the whole country. Even though the sample has all elements that form the whole country, there is a need for future studies collect data throughout the country. Second, the collection of data from the same source that may subject to common method variance. However, Harman one-factor test was conducted and the results reveal that of the total 82.9% variance explained by the un-rotated factor analysis, the first factor account for only 28.3%.

Literature with a Nigerian background on all variables studied was scanty. The assumption made of non-availability of literature is another limitation. Future studies should consider search data on printed material rather than relying heavily on indexed journals on the internet.

6. CONCLUSION

The study has modestly modelled a relationship between employee silence and WFE and WFC. The results indicated that employee silence has a negative relationship with WFE. The assumption that silence being an impediment in the work domain is likely to be positively related with WFC was not established. Therefore, management should promote conducive climate for expression of divergent ideas and opinions as silence in organization will also impact the family domain.

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