

Original Article (Mixed)

# Designing a defensive silence failure model of creative employees in organizations

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to provide a model to break the defensive silence of creative employees in government organizations. In terms of purpose, the present research is applicable, and a mixed exploratory research of qualitative-quantitative type. The statistical population in the qualitative part of the research includes 20 experts (university professors and researchers familiar with the research topic) and managers and deputies of government organizations, and the statistical population in the quantitative part includes 345 people of managers and deputies and experts of government organizations in Ilam province. The sampling method in the qualitative part is a purposeful judgment, and in the quantitative part it is a cluster sampling method. The collection tool in the qualitative part is open interviews with experts; and in the quantitative part, a researcher-made questionnaire. For data analysis, theme analysis and fuzzy Delphi technique were used in the qualitative part, and structural equations were used in the quantitative part. A total of 94 sub-themes and 20 main themes were identified. The 20 main themes that have been identified as influencing factors on breaking the defensive silence of creative employees in government organizations are: facilitating policies, motivational factors, job security, collaborative management, governance of meritocracy, leadership style, improvement of individual skills, organizational learning, strengthening professional ethics, quality of relationships, health of relationships, mutual trust, spirituality in the workplace, creative and critical atmosphere, cooperation culture, consulting and positive organizational psychology, reducing psychological pressures, creating attitudinal changes, changing organizational strategies, and strengthening strategic thinking.

**Keywords:**

organizational silence,  
defensive silence,  
breaking of defensive  
silence,  
creative employees,  
leadership style,  
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## Extended abstract

### Introduction

In organizations, employees play a very important role. They are the vital element of the organization that contribute to the activity and work performance of the organization by performing their duties and responsibilities (Gencer et al, 2023). Organizations expect their employees to be more responsible and innovative than in the past and talk about organizational issues and problems due to the increasingly competitive environment, high expectations of customers and great attention to the quality of products and services that indicate the ever-increasing changes in organizational environments. In order for organizations to survive in such conditions, they need employees who can respond to such a challenging environment; that is, those who are not afraid to share their knowledge and information with others and provide their opinions in the form of suggestions and criticisms or innovative ideas to organizations (Alipuor Baei et al, 2022). Despite the fact that providing suitable conditions to encourage employees to participate more in organizational environments and also their ideas in the form of presenting opinions and suggestions is one of the necessities that has been emphasized in the field of organization and management knowledge in recent years, many of Organizations expect their employees to express only certain words and conversations, especially in the direction of confirming the current conditions and status of the organization, and for this purpose, they use various reward and punishment mechanisms. In such a situation, over time, despite the fact that employees have good ideas for organizations, they prefer not to present their ideas and remain silent and somehow remain indifferent to the future of their organization (Piran et al, 2017). Organizational silence refers to the lack of communication, neglected requirements, lack of information sharing and instability in the organizational work environment (Sulphey & Jasim, 2022). Organizational silence means not disseminating information and knowledge within the organization; which occurs when people within the organization prevent part of their knowledge, information or opinions from participating and transmitting it to others (Lotfi Dehkhargani & Maharati, 2022). Therefore, the researcher is trying to answer the question: what is the model for breaking the defensive silence of creative employees in government organizations?

### Theoretical Framework

#### Organizational silence

Organizational silence is a phenomenon in which the employees of the organization refrain from commenting on the organization's issues for various reasons, and remain silent (Takhsha et al, 2020). Organizational silence is defined as refraining from expressing behavioral, cognitive and effectiveness evaluations about organizational situations. In other words, organizational silence is a social phenomenon where employees purposefully refuse information and opinions about the organization (Doaei & Sabokroo, 2022).

#### Defensive silence

The absence of voice is silence, although the motivation for silence is the most meaningful message to analyze when considering organizational silence. By using targeted silence, employees collectively withhold information that could affect the growth and success of the organization. Therefore, organizational silence can be seen as a situation where employees have seemingly valuable information, opinions, concerns or ideas, and decide to withhold this information (Masoumi & Faizi, 2021). Defensive silence is a type of organizational silence that occurs when the employee fears the consequences of speaking up, or perceives that speaking up will have a negative impact (Moalemian et al, 2021).

Powell (2023) in a study investigated the drivers of organizational silence and strategies to deal with them and finally reached the conclusion that; the most important influencing factors in reducing organizational silence are the perception of organizational support and the rule of meritocracy in organizations.

Fang-Shu & Ramayah (2022) in a study investigated the effect of participatory management on reducing employees' defensive silence by mediating the quality of communication and finally reached the conclusion that; participatory management and the quality of the organization's internal communication have a significant impact on the breaking of employees' defensive silence.

### **Research methodology**

This research is applicable-developmental in terms of purpose, and exploratory in nature. The statistical community in the qualitative section includes 20 experts (academic faculty members and experts in the field of public administration and organizational behavior, professors familiar with the subject of research, managers and creative employees with experience in government organizations of Ilam province). The statistical population of the research in the quantitative part includes all managers, assistants and experts of the government organizations of Ilam province; according to the statistics published by the vice-president of human resources development of Ilam province, their number is equal to 2200 people. The number of samples for the quantitative part was based on Morgan's table and 327 people were selected. In this research, semi-structured interviews were used to identify the indicators and components of defensive silence breaking of creative employees in government organizations. The research tool in the quantitative part is a researcher-made questionnaire.

### **Research findings**

For data analysis, theme analysis and fuzzy Delphi technique were used in the qualitative part, and structural equations were used in the quantitative part. A total of 94 sub-themes and 20 main themes were identified. The 20 main themes that have been identified as influencing factors on breaking the defensive silence of creative employees in government organizations are: facilitating policies, motivational factors, job security, collaborative management, governance of meritocracy, leadership style, improvement of individual skills, organizational learning., strengthening professional ethics, quality of relationships, health of relationships, mutual trust, spirituality in the workplace, creative and critical atmosphere, cooperation culture, consulting and positive organizational psychology, reducing psychological pressures, creating attitudinal changes, changing organizational strategies, and strengthening strategic thinking.

### **Conclusion**

The present study was conducted with the aim of providing a model to break the defensive silence of creative employees in government organizations. This result is in agreement with the research results of Powell (2023), Fang-Shu & Ramayah (2022), Sulphey & Jasim (2022), kord firouzjaie & zeinabadi (2022), Olcer & Coskun (2022), Gencer et al, (2021), Masoumi & Faizi (2021), Larijani (2021), Afkhami Ardakani et al, (2021), Jan et al, (2019), Kalaa et al, (2019), Kord firouzjaie & zeinabadi (2022). Employees who have a proper understanding of the organization's support are committed to the organization, and the voices of committed employees are always heard in organizations. Supporting employees in organizations causes the voice of employees and employees' opinions to appear in a reasonable and appropriate manner, which ultimately will moderate the deadly organizational silence (Jan et al, 2019).

According to the results obtained from the research, it is suggested:



Holding training courses: holding training courses and workshops for employees about the break of organizational silence and their benefits. Providing training on the recognition and principles of supporting employees in the face of defensive silence can also be useful.

Implement supportive policies and procedures: Develop and implement policies and procedures that allow employees to break the defensive silence and report problems and deficiencies without fear of negative consequences.

Designing confidential mechanisms: creating safe and confidential mechanisms to welcome employee reports and complaints, so that their personality is protected and they do not experience any negative consequences.