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Perceived Influence of Employees' Behavioral Silence on Organizational Commitment among Employees of Selected Retail Firms in Lagos Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Organizational commitment accounts for the degree of employees' willingness to lend their voices and share creative suggestions, ideas, and concerns about organizational concerns. Due to this incontrovertible assertion, this study examined employees' silence behavior and organizational commitment. Social exchange theory served as the theoretical foundation of the study. A descriptive and survey research design was adopted for a population of the study is two hundred and five (205) and the Krejcie and Morgan sample size formula was employed in deriving a sampling frame of ninety-four (94) respondents at a 95% level of significance and 0,.5 rate of error. Results from the correlation coefficients indicated that a positive but weak relationship was found between acquiescent silence and affective commitment with ($r=0.158$, p-value<0.05), quiescent silence and continuance commitment ($r = 0.277$, p-value<0.05), pro-social normative commitment ($r=0.052$, p-value<0.05). The study concluded that employees, who are committed to their jobs, will not withhold valuable suggestions and opinions that could improve the organization. However, it was recommended that the management of the selected retail firms establish a framework that can help boost the morale of employees to make them speak up in work-related matters; this will help increase their organizational pride and positively intensify their organizational citizenship behavior to the organization.

1. Introduction

The degree of commitment reflects how much value the management places on their employees as partners and stakeholders; and not just mere production tools. Thus, when an employee finds a work environment to be positive and supportive, the employee will be willing to lend his voice and share his ideas and concerns about Organisation issues that will lead to development. However, if an employee finds a workplace environment to be negative or non-supportive, the employee will be dissatisfied and thus, not willing to share his ideas and concerns about organizational concerns and issues. The quest to be highly innovative in the area of inventive idea generation and creativity in the aspect of suggestions has been of keen interest to management in the contemporary era; owning to a high degree of customers' or clients' expectations (Oduyoye, Francis & Ashikia, 2020).

However, it has been noted from the literature that Organisations struggle to meet their objectives because of a lack of dedicated staff. Despite the fact that employees are crucial to the growth and survival of the company and that they serve as the platform for change, they may purposely act both individually and collectively withhold their opinions on work-related improvement or change (Idowu, 2019).

Even while it is crucial to equip workers with new communication channels in workplaces where workers must take initiative, some anxieties stemming from a lack of trust in Organisations continue to be a major barrier for workers (Arif, 2020). This situation can influence commitment to their Organisation. According to Asma, Suria, Aznita and Noor (2020) silence behavior denotes a significant pattern of behavioral scope, which can either improve organizational commitment or cause damage. It occurs when members of an Organisation purposely withhold pertinent information from the Organisation for various reasons. Employees remain silent as a result of disengaged behaviors, fear of negative feedback, and covering the faults of other employees. Employees' motivation to deprive Organisations of their expert opinions and views has been attributed to three factors. Acquiescent silence, quiescent silence and pro social silence (Van, Dyne, 2003). In addition to hindering Organizational growth, silence behavior also has a number of negative effects, including slowing down decision-making, stifling innovation, escalating internal conflict, preventing positive or negative feedback to management, and lowering employee commitment (Oduyoye, Francis, Asikiha, 2020).

Employees as the most valuable asset of business organizations will be committed when they receive clear communication and trust their leaders. Kormax (2019) describes the components of commitment using the Allen and Meyer commitment model. They are affective, normative, and continuance commitment. This element according to Arif (2019) establishes a psychological bond between employees and the Organisation that defines their relationships and influences how they will act in the future. The committed number of employees has the least propensity as well as the likelihood to maintain decorum, keep quiet, or withhold their opinions regarding particular organizational issues. Based on the foregoing, this study investigated the perceived influence of employees' behavioral silence on organizational commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

The fear of negative feedback from superiors, labeling by coworkers, and indifferent attitude can affect organizational commitments. Some employees because of fear or embarrassment may intentionally withhold information instead of speaking out when they

consider the costs and benefits of remaining in the Organisation, while some with a loyalty perception feel indebted and this may cause them to remain silent in other to protect their Organisation. Passive. Employees; may find it difficult to commit emotionally to the organisation. This might impair and diminish emotional attachment. Employees either individually or in groups continue to voluntarily or involuntarily withhold and are reluctant to share information that can bring about work-related improvement (Idowu, 2019). They don't speak up for various reasons such as negative Organisation climate, bullying, fear of isolation, and exploitation. This phenomenon according to Oduyoye, Francis, and Asikiha, (2020) not only hinders Organizational development but also has a number of negative effects including preventing innovation and altering staff commitment. One of the sources of employee commitment to an Organisation is the ability to participate and express one's views and opinions on issues without fear or embarrassment.

Few local research findings (Durowoju & Elegunde, 2018, Oduyeye, Francis, Ashikia, 2020, Idowu, 2019) have only linked silence behavior to other organizational outcomes, including employee efficiency and Organisation performance, and other climates studies have successfully looked at concepts such as job satisfaction, Organisation commitment alongside dimensions of Organizational silence. However, most of their findings seem contradictory (Arif, 2019, Adel, Rayn, Nadial, Ali & Mostafa, 2020). No study has considered silence behavior in line with employees' commitment locally especially in retail firms in selected metropolises in the Lagos region. Thus, this study filled this gap by examining the perceived influence of employees' behavioral silence on organizational commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis.

Objective of the study
The objective of this study was premised on:
   i.   determining the connection between acquiescent silence and affective commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis;
   ii. finding out the link allying quiescent silence and continuance commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis; and
   iii. investigating the nexus between pro-social silence and normative commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis.

Hypotheses Development

The study tested the following hypotheses:
H0_1: Meaningful connection is not found within acquiescent silence and affective commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis.

H0_2: There is no significant correlation between quiescent silence and continuance of organizational commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis.

H03: There is no significant relationship between pro-social silence and normative commitment among employees of selected retail firms in Lagos Metropolis.

Literature Review

The literature herein was reviewed accordingly through conceptual explanations, theoretical anchorage, and empirical review with a presentation of the schematic framework of the variables that make up the study.

Conceptual Descriptions

Concept of Silent Behavior of Employees

Being silent as a pattern of behavior can be alluded to involve numerous factors (Imran, Ahmed, Aamir, Abdul, Gafar & Saaherah, 2020). These factors can be grouped into three.

Individual factors: When individuals perceive that expressing themselves would negatively affect their safety, they will rather fold their hands and remain silent. Also, shy individuals are oriented towards keeping to themselves and are unlikely to put themselves in vulnerability.

Leadership and Organisation factors: A toxic work environment created by Organizational leadership can lead to employee silence. A lot of Organizational leadership have discouraged upward communication or feedback mechanism to limit employees from expressing their opinions, ideas thought, and feedback (Arif, 2019).

Colleague factors: The fear of being victimized by a section or group of coworkers in an Organisation can promote silent behavior. This situation can affect the relationship among workers and might hinder them from some benefits such as promotion and career development. Some employees will remain silent over an issue because they feel that their ideas or opinions will affect the point of view of the majority for fear of being isolated (Imran, Junaid, Aamir, Abdul, Saaherah, 2020). Similar to that, keeping quiet could be done for the benefit of others. This could be based on the motive of cooperation.

Dimensions of Silence Behavior

There are several dimensions of Silence behavior in Organisations (Van, Ang, Botero, 2003). For this study, we use the 3 indicators as dimensions of silence behavior

Acquiescent Silence: An acquiescence worker feels powerless or ineffective and has lost any hope of improvement. Past researchers and studies like Durowoju & Elegunde. (2018), Devinder (2022), and Hyma (2019) have established that the acquiescent silent behavior by Organisation members can impair, diminish, and affect job satisfaction, employee performance, intention to leave, and subsequently Organisation commitment. Since acquiescent workers are passive and indifferent about Organizational issues, their commitment level can be low.

Quiescent Silence: This category of employees conceals ideas and opinions for fear of being. Victimized. It can also be called a defensive form of silence (Laurencia et al, 2020). They conceal information in order to protect themselves against any threat. When individuals perceive that expressing their voice would jeopardize their safety or would not produce expected feedback, they will choose to fold their hands and remain silent. These people deprive companies of potentially useful information. Quiescent silence is a deliberate act by employees that is aimed at protecting them from both internal and external threats (Durowoju & Elegunde, 2018).

Prosocial Silence: Organizational silence was initially categorized into acquiescent and quiescent silence, Van Dyne (2003) later included pro-social silence. It is underpinned and

predicated on the notion of collaboration and a combination of efforts. According to Durowoju & Elegunde (2018). Pro-social silence as described by research on organizational citizenship behavior is the process by which thoughts that are related, associated, and connected with the intention of helping others or the management or the workforce. It is a discretional behavior that cannot be mandated by an Organisation (Durowoju & Elegunde, 2018).

Organizational Commitment

Different studies have described the concept of employee commitment differently. According to Robbins, Judge, and Sanghi (2008) referenced in Asenge and Dewua (2020), is the degree to which a worker aspires to identify with a company's goals and aspirations. Organizational commitment is the magnitude of employees' identification with an organization, in the area of its objectives, goals, and aspirations and making resolutions towards notably aligning with its prospects. Employees who are highly committed believe they will stay with the Organisation. Committed employees will naturally engage in consistent lines of activity that produce positive outcomes. According to Odu and Akhigbe (2018); and Ashfaq, Abid, and Ilyas (2021) who also claimed that devoted employees are more likely to be eager to make sacrifices for the firm. Allen and Meyer presented a critical viewpoint on organizational commitment, breaking it down into three distinct parts: Affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Sporda, Orgutsei & Baghlik, 2019).

Affective Organizational Commitment: Affective commitment ultimately represents the uttermost researched component of commitment. It is the emotional attachment to an Organisation. The deep link that an employee has with his or her company is referred to as Organizational commitment (Indriani, Yulia, & Nadirsyah, 2019). According to Udin, Dananjoyo, Shaikh, and Linarta (2022), affective commitment is defined as an emotional tie of the employee to the company. Employees who are effectively committed to an Organisation naturally take charge and associate themselves with the vision and mission of the Organisation, they are satisfied and see themselves as partners. In comparison to other components of other forms of commitment, it is the center core that has the greatest influence on work actions, feelings, and individual perceptions (Odu & Akhigbe, 2018; Ashfaq, Abid & Ilyas 2021)

Continuance Organizational Commitment: Here, emotional attachment plays a minimal role in workers' decisions to stay with the Organisation. Workers are consistently attached to a line of activity based on the perceived cost and benefits associated with leaving the Organisation. According to Cherian (2018), this occurs when employees determine that staying with their Organisation continues to provide more benefits and profits than leaving would. Adewoyin, et al (2020) define continuance commitment as the desire to continue being a part of an Organisation while being aware that quitting would be more expensive than staying. They adduced further that this commitment arises when there are benefits involved and associated with remaining as well as the significant cost linked with leaving the organization. The continuance component can be looked into in two ways. Firstly, a number of investments individuals make, and secondly, a perceived lack of alternatives.

Normative Organizational Commitment: Employees who adhere to this component of commitment do so because they believe it is the ethical and moral thing to do. They continue to be members of the Organisation because they believe it to be the right thing to do. This supports Muhammad et al (2021) argument that employees are more inclined to stay with an Organisation if they consider that doing so is morally and legally correct (Shafiq et al, 2021).

Theoretical Anchorage

The theory guiding this study is the "social exchange theory". In further comprehending the scope of this theory, it can be aptly reported that in the year 1958, the "social exchange theory" was postulated by George Homans.

Social Exchange Theory

Cook, Cheshire, and Rice (2013) identified that social exchange lies between two parties, which consists of trade. Individuals weigh the potential benefits and risks of relationships (Durowoju & Elegunde, 2018). The theory is of the view that when the cost of entering into a relationship outweighs the benefits, individuals will abandon the relationship.

For this purpose, decisions are being made on the grounds of the level of perceived cost vis-à-vis its mutual benefits to the concerned parties. The momentousness of this idea is that employees experience fear and choose to keep quiet because of some leadership and organizational factors that are present inside the organization. This emotion might tamper with their level of commitment to the organization. The cost of individuals letting go of their jobs through their loss or being victimized by co-workers and colleagues can spur many of these employees to maintain absolute decorum. Therefore, what keeps them hanging and managing with the organization is benefits in the area of pecks, pay, and other forms of incentives.

Empirical Review

Adel, Rayan, Nadial, Ali, and Mostafa (2020) launched a study on the line manager's preference for silence and Organizational commitment: Mediating role of organizational silent behavior was studied. The investigations indicated that there is a bad correlation between organizational commitment and supervisor support for silence when using the structural model to test the hypothesis. Supervisor support for silence is positively correlated with organizational silence. Behavior and organizational commitment are negatively correlated with organizational silence. Additionally, the study found that organizational silence practices mediated the link between organizational commitment and supervisor support for silence. The outcome also demonstrates the favorable and significant impact that top management traits, communication, opportunity, subordinate perception of feedback, and official authority had on employee productivity. They advised management to promote greater top-to-bottom communication.

Muhammed, Ahsan, Khalid, Nauman & Ahmad (2016) studied silence behavior as a predictor of Organizational performance in higher education institutions. The study utilized the Pearson moment correlation and regression analysis to test the hypothesis. The result shows a positive relationship between silence behavior and employee commitment but regression analysis indicates an insignificant relationship between the variables.

A study by Jamil, Mubasher, Shamila, Maria & Mohammad (2022) on the relationship between Organizational silence and the commitment of employees at the university level. For analysis, the t-test and Pearson correlation were employed. The finding looked at how Organizational silence and staff commitment at universities are positively correlated. It was suggested that the institution's administration create an atmosphere where professors can freely communicate their thoughts, emotions, and knowledge and feel like family.

A study led by Idowu (2019) investigated the interrelatedness of employees' expectations and silence demonstrated by the management of organizations. It was revealed from the findings that all the indices of employee expectation: employee ownership, employee appreciation, and employee control separately have a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with Organizational silence.   The study unlike other studies established that the types of Organizational silence are not only limited to acquiescent, quiescent, and defensive but also include accrual benefits. From the above, the reason for these different results of the association and links between the domain of behavioral silence and employees' commitment is a subject predicated on the evaluation of the independent construct.
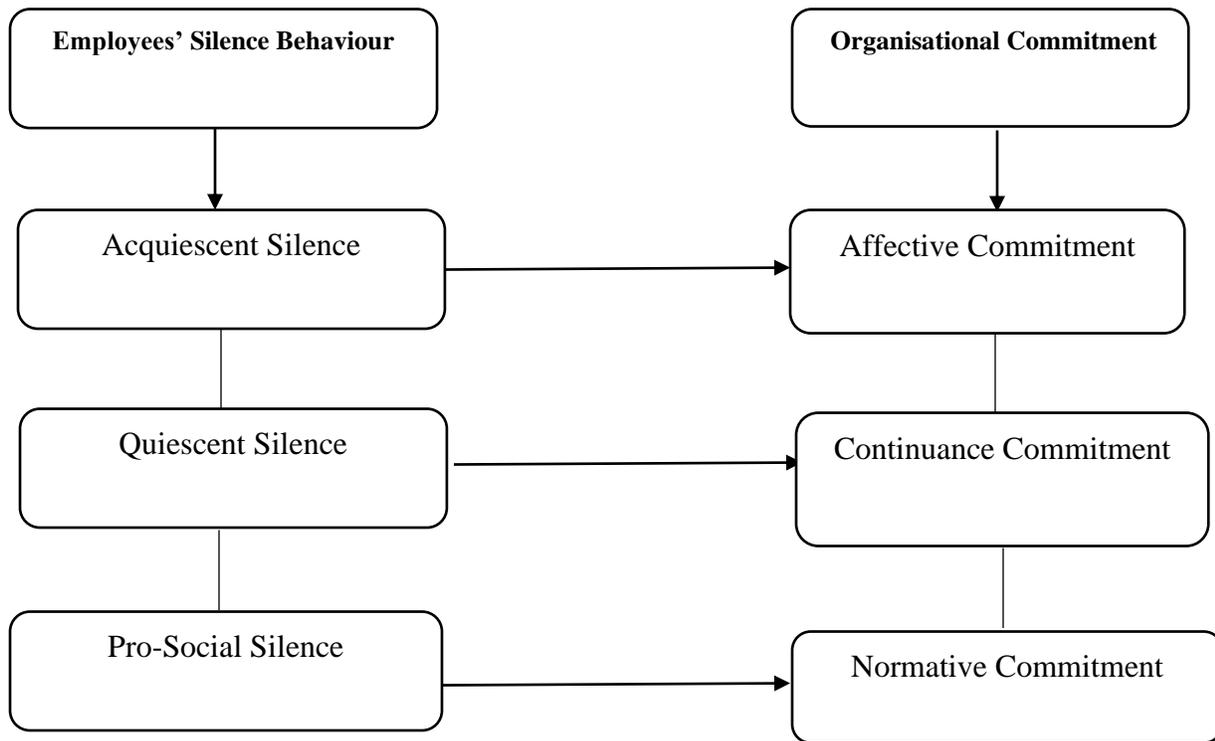
Schematic Model of the Study

Fig 1: Research Framework
Source: Authors Schematic Model, (2023)

Methodology

In order to investigate the relationship between the predictor (SB) and the criteria (EC), this study used the descriptive survey research design. Two hundred and five staff (205) from Heritage Supermarket in Teeremz Stores and Prince Ebeano Supermarket made up the research population. Using the sample size determination chart from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample size of one hundred and one (103) was determined. The Bowleys model of proportionate sampling proportions was used in obtaining the (103) person sample as follows:

Number of selected companies' respondents X   Sample Size.
Total number staff

$$\frac{135}{205} \quad X \quad 103 \quad = \quad 68$$

$$\frac{70}{205} \quad X \quad 103 \quad = \quad 35$$

Table I: Sample determination size for Teeremz Stores and Prince Ebeano Supermarket

Population	Teeremz Stores	Prince Ebeano Supermarket	Total
	70	135	**205**
Sample size	35	68	**103**

Source: Researchers Computation, (2023)

A well-structured, close-ended questionnaire that was modified from existing scales in the literature served as the study instrument. The indicators used in the study were modified versions of those created by Dyne, Van, and Soon, (2003) for the undependable (SB) and Allen and Meyer (1991) for the dependable variable (EC) instrument used. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A focused on some basic background information such as age, gender, marital status, and educational qualification as it applies to each respondent. Section B contained questions on the independent variable (Silence behavior components). Finally, section C contained questions on the dependent variable (employee commitment dimensions). Responses were collected using a five-point (5) Likert Scale from every question in the questionnaire; Strongly Agree (SA) – 5; Agree (A) – 4; Undecided (UN) – 3; Disagree (D) – 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1. Bi-correlational analytical tools served as the mechanism and approach for testing and the formulated hypotheses for the research.

Analysis and Results

The researcher was able to retrieve ninety-four (94) of the one hundred and three (103) copies of the questionnaires that were given to the respondents from the chosen Organisations as shown below:

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated earlier were tested according to the responses from the respondents using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Hypothesis One: There is no meaningful relationship between acquiescent silence and affective commitment in retail firms

		Acquiescent silence	Affective commitment
Acquiescent silence	Pearson Correlation	1	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.128
	N	94	94
Affective commitment	Pearson Correlation	.158	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.128	
	N	94	94

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation carried out to test the relationship between acquiescent silence and affective commitment. The correlation coefficient r = .0.158 with a Sig. level 2 tailed is insignificant at p≤0.05. The correlation coefficient indicates a positive but weak relationship between the variables. Here the p-value is 0.128 which is greater than the level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis will be maintained.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant correlation between quiescent silence and continuance commitment in retail firms

		Quiescent Silence	Continuance Commitment
Quiescent Silence	Pearson Correlation	1	.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	94	94
Normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	. 277**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	94	94

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 indicates the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation carried out to test the relationship between quiescent silence and continuance commitment. The correlation r= .0.277**with a Sig. level 2 tailed is insignificant at p≤0.05. The correlation coefficient indicates a positive but weak relationship between the variables. Here the p-value is 0.007 which is not less than the level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between pro-social silence and normative commitment in retail firms

		Prosocial silence	Normative silence
Prosocial Silence	Pearson Correlation	1	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.617
	N	94	94
Normative Silence	Pearson Correlation	.052	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.617	
	N	94	94

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation carried out to test the relationship between pro-social silence and normative commitment. The correlation r = .0.052 with a Sig. level 2 tailed is insignificant at p≤0.05. The correlation coefficient indicates a positive but weak relationship between the variables. Here the p-value is 0.617 which is greater than the level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is maintained at a 95% confidence interval.

Discussion of Findings

Results of correlation analysis displayed in the tables above indicated that acquiescent, quiescent, and pro-social silence (dimensions of silence behavior) were found to be positively associated with affective, continuance, and normative commitment (dimensions of organizational commitment), but are not significant at 5% significance level. Acquiescent, quiescent, and pro-social silence explained a positive but weak relationship with R-values of 0.158. 0.277, and 0.052 respectively. The result corroborates with a previous study carried out by Jamil, Mubasher, Shamila, Maria, and Mohammad (2022); (Muhammad, Alhsan, Mehran, Muhammad, Hussein, 2016) that found a positive correlation and insignificance between dimensions of Organizational silence and employee commitment but Arif (2019) found the opposite results, This study established a revelation inferring that a direct association can be found between the constructs. This was also validated and reflected in the principle of "social exchange theory" which Schaufeli (2013) put forward. The insight of this theoretical frontier alluded that when the perception of cost far outweighs the inherent mutual benefit, the involved individuals will abandon such a relationship as it proves to be unfavorable.

Conclusion

From the outcome of the study, it can be concluded that silence behavior and employees' commitment are directly related and connected. This is because commitment is a catalyst of organizational advancement and is a function of so many latent factors from which employees' silence is principal. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that employees' silent behavior has potentially caused a significant reduction in employees' efficiency and dedication to organizational tasks. As such, establishing a rewarding climate and guaranteeing safety remains a cardinal medium for which employees can freely express themselves without any fear of prejudice and punishment. Finally, establishing a work surrounding that is humorous can assist in curtailing any form of hostility and allow employees to air their opinions in the aspect of

commendations and displeasures. In conspectus, employees' behavioral silence is capable enough of negatively influencing as well as on job satisfaction and damaging the well-being commitment of employees at work to a meaningful extent.

Recommendations

Based on the study outcome, revelation, and results, the following recommendations were provided by the researchers:

  i.   Management of the retail firms explored in the study should prioritize an environment of work that is mirrored by a high degree of sense of compassion, empowerment, flexibility, humor, respect, and understanding for curtailing employees' silent behavior and stimulating increased commitment of employees towards greater efficiency;

 ii.   Management of the selected retail firms should create an environment capable of enhancing the sharing of creative ideas and views through open communication channels;

iii.   Management of the selected retail firms should establish a framework that can help boost the morale of employees to make them speak up in work-related matters; this will help increase their organizational pride and positively intensify their organizational citizenship behavior to the organization;

 iv.   Management of the surveyed retail firms can reduce the climate of silence at work through the enhancement of both organizational commitment and employees' professional attachment; and

  v.   Finally, the management of the selected retail firms should create a measure of enhancement of employees' pride in their various lines of duties through the provision of a constructive feedback mechanism.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Future research may be conducted in more organized private and public organizations in Nigeria in order to expand and widen the scope of the subject matter. The silent behavior of employees from the corridor reflects the degree to which the commitment of employees could assist in the realization of organizational objectives. In the same manner, studies of this sort should encompass different populations and incorporate mediating variables. Further studies should consider adopting a mixed method of analysis (quantitative and qualitative study) so as to reconcile some of the findings.

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