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# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE

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## ABSTRACT

Based on the concepts of organizational behavior, this study was designed and implemented to investigate the relationship between the quality of work life and organizational silence in auditors. Therefore, the quality of work life was defined by Walton's theory (1973), and organizational silence was defined by Knoll and Van Dick's theory (2012). The main hypothesis was formulated in this regard. Using Cronbach's alpha method, the reliabilities of questionnaires were calculated to be 0.953 and 0.943 for the above-mentioned variables, respectively. In this study, 185 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 152 were collected. Employing exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, the validity of the test was confirmed through the KMO index. Finally, the findings obtained on SPSS and LISREL indicated a significant relationship between the quality of work life and the dimensions of organizational silence in the statistical population including auditors working at Supreme Audit Court in the West of Iran.

**Keywords:** *Quality of Work Life, Organizational Silence, Acquiescent Silence, Quiescent Silence, Prosocial Silence, Opportunistic Silence, Supreme Audit Court*

## INTRODUCTION

Researchers have been interested in the concepts of silence and voice for more than 50 years. Employees often have constructive ideas, information and opinions to improve the tasks in any organization. Sometimes, such employees express their ideas, information and opinions assiduously; however, they are silent some other times, avoiding expressing their ideas, information and opinions. It appears that expressing and concealing ideas are two opposite behavioral poles, because silence does not mean avoid speaking; however, voice refers to speaking about important issues and problems in any organization (Dyne *et al.*, 2003).

Improving employees' quality of work life requires organization management to attempt to make policies supporting human resources. In this regard, the optimal use of human resources relies on the development of relevant policies and measures which are meant to protect employees' bodies, spirits and dignities. The quality of work life refers to a set of measures including welfare and health facilities, job security, job design, job importance, career development and promotion, training, development and so on. Nowadays, the concept of quality of work life has turned into a major social issue all over the world; however, the emphasis used to be only on personal life.

In today's society, improving the quality of work life has become one of the most important goals of employees and organizations.

Since there is a direct relationship between the measures of human resources management and the quality of work life, reviving employees by improving the quality of work life is considered the key to success in any organization (BazazJazayeri and Pardakhtchi, 2007).

According to Lau (2000), although there are major differences in quality of work life programs with various secondary objectives, all of them have one primary objective. It means that they all want to make the organizational structure organic, dynamic and humane, while turning the organization into a more appealing and satisfactory workplace (Esfahani and Imami, 2013).

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Flippo (1998) stated, “The quality of work life program includes every sort of improvement in organizational culture which would result in the growth and development of employees in organization; therefore, the value system of quality of work life considers that investment in individuals is the most important variable in strategic management equation.” According to Gordon (1993), research findings indicated that the components of such programs would reduce employees’ complaints, absenteeism rate, and the levels at which disciplinary regulations are applied and increase employees’ positive attitude and participation in suggestion system programs (Mirkamali and NarenjiSani, 2008).

Given the insufficient field studies on the relationship between the variables of quality of work life and organizational silence in Iran, the current study was codified and implemented to investigate the relationship between these two variables among auditors working at Supreme Audit Court in the West of Iran.

## **Hypotheses**

1. There is a significant relationship between the quality of work life and organizational silence in the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court.
2. There is a significant relationship between the quality of work life and acquiescent silence in the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court.
3. There is a significant relationship between the quality of work life and quiescent silence in the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court.
4. There is a significant relationship between the quality of work life and prosocial silence in the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court.
5. There is a significant relationship between the quality of work life and opportunistic silence in the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court.

## **Quality of Work Life**

The quality of work life is a process by which all organizational members are involved in the decisions which generally influence their jobs through appropriate and open channels of communication created for that purpose. Therefore, their job satisfaction and participation would increase, and the stress caused by workload would decrease (Dolan and Schuler, 2008; quoted by Soltani and Dastani, 2010).

As defined by Walker (1992), the quality of work life includes the promotion of a workplace satisfying employees’ needs. Walker (1992) identified group work and sense of ownership, resulting from managers’ efforts to meet employees’ needs, as the necessary factors for productivity and efficiency. Sirgy and Efraty (1990) conceptualized the quality of work life in terms of the need for satisfaction. In their next studies, Sirgy *et al.*, (2001), defined the quality of work life under various categories of employees’ needs which would come from resources, activities and results of participation in workplace. They stated that the quality of work life was assessed in the form of employees’ needs (Koonmee *et al.*, 2010).

Walton believed that the quality of work life refers to the ability of working organizational member to meet their individual needs in organization through their experiences. Walton introduced methods by which managers would be influenced by employees’ variable expectations in the future. Walton defined eight main conceptual categories (Walton, 1973).

1. Adequate and Fair Compensation: An equal payment per equal work, and the proportion of payments to social norms and employees’ standards, and its proportion to other types of work
2. Safe and Healthy Working Conditions: Creating physically safe working conditions and setting reasonable working hours
3. Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacities: Providing opportunities such as independence and self-control at work, benefiting from various skills, and accessing work-relating information
4. Opportunity for Career Growth: Providing the groundwork for the improvement of individual abilities, opportunities for development and use of acquired skills, and providing security for income and employment

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5. Social Integration in the Workforce: Creating an appropriate atmosphere which strengthens employees' feeling of belonging to organization and the fact that they are required by organization
6. Constitutionalism in the Organization: Providing the freedom of speech without the fear of how superior managers would react and the dominance of law over human domination
7. General Work and Life Atmosphere: Establishing a balance between work life and other parts of employees' lives including free times, education, and family
8. Social Relevance of Work Life: How employees understand social responsibility in organization (ibid)

### **Organizational Silence**

Perlow *et al.*, (2003) stated, "Can silence be good?" Silence is associated with many facts such as humbleness, respect for others, caution, and civility. Moreover, according to DanLiut *et al.*, (2009), employees are considered the main source of change, creativity, learning and innovation, which are factors playing an important role in the success of any organization. Many employees do not express their opinions, although they are worried about many things happening in their organization (Khonifar *et al.*, 2010).

Brinsfield *et al.*, (2009) defined silence as individuals' prevention from expressing ideas, information, opinions or concerns about the problems pertaining to job and organization (Deniz *et al.*, 2013). Studies conducted by Brinsfield indicated that employees' silence was a multi-dimensional, measurable, and contagious phenomenon significantly correlated with other organizational phenomena (Zehir and Erdogan, 2011).

Organizational silence occurs due to managers' fundamental beliefs such as fear of negative feedback and a set of managers' implied beliefs which would result in organizational structures, processes and managerial methods preventing silence level inside the organization (Morrison *et al.*, 2000). According to Coshal and Moran (1996), another belief leading to organizational silence is the viewpoint in which only the management understands (Ewing, 1997). The point considered by Edwin is that such belief is accepted as an ideology in the majority of organizations. Furthermore, according to Clauser (1984), this belief is popular because managers are supposed to control directly, where as subordinates should simply follow (Deniz *et al.*, 2013).

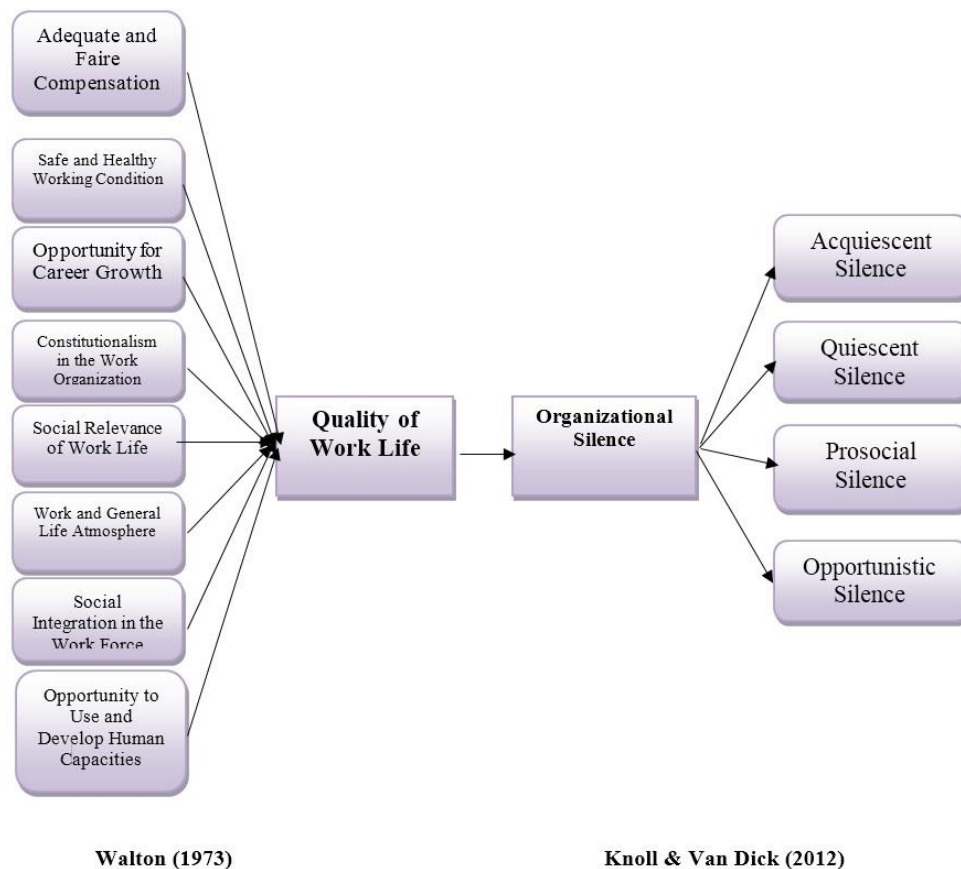
Silence in an organization refers to a state in which employees avoid paying attention to work issues such as illegal or unethical actions or procedures which violate personal, ethical or legal standards. Knoll and Van Dick (2012) identified four dimensions of silence as acquiescent silence, quiescent silence, prosocial silence and opportunistic silence which is defined as follows (Knoll and Dick, 2012).

1. Acquiescent Silence: Morrison and Milicken (2000) argued that employees would not express their ideas because they often believe that their opinions might not be required and evaluated by their officials and managers.
2. Quiescent Silence: It refers to the active prevention of presenting information, pertaining to self-support, based on the fear in which the individual thinks that comments may result in unpleasant consequences.
3. Prosocial Silence: Dyne *et al.*, (2003) defined society-favoring silence as the prevention of expressing ideas, information or opinions pertaining to work in order to benefit other individuals or organizations for the sake of altruism or common incentives.
4. Opportunistic Silence: Employees sometimes benefit from avoiding presenting information in order to gain interest (Knoll and Van Dick, 2012).

### **Conceptual Model**

The research conceptual model is based on the relationships between several factors deemed more important in the study. It was highly essential to combine the researcher's logical beliefs with the published studies in order to create a scientific basis to investigate the subject matter. Considering the previously mentioned facts, the research general framework is indicated in Figure 1 as the research main model.

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**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Methodology

This was an applied, descriptive-correlational study. The statistical population contained all of the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court in the West of Iran including provinces such as Ilam, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Lorestan and Hamadan. According to the statistics, there were 181 individuals when the study was being carried out. Morgan's table was used for sampling. The sample size was estimated to be 152 individuals.

### Tools Used to Determine Reliability and Validity

In addition to the desk review, the field method was used to collect necessary information. Walton's quality of work life questionnaire, including 26 questions, was used in this survey along with Knoll and Van Dick's organizational silence scale including 20 items. Cronbach's alpha test was used to calculate the reliability of questionnaires. This coefficient was obtained to be 0.953 for quality of work life; however, it was calculated to be 0.943 for organizational silence. Benefiting from the opinions and instructions of some experts and professors, the validity of questionnaire was investigated, and the ambiguities were removed. In this study, the confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the validity of the structures of independent and dependent variables. Confirmatory factor analysis is one of the main elements in structural equation modeling.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

According to the research descriptive results, the majority of respondents were men. In other words, 88.8% of respondents were men, while 11.2% were women. The age group of 31-40 years old was the most frequent with 43.4%. The most frequent education degree was a bachelor's degree (55.9%). In terms

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of job experience, respondents having 5-10 years of job experience were the most frequent (38.8%), and the most frequent field of activity was auditing (29.6%).

### Data Analysis

Before investigating the research hypotheses, it was necessary to employ Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of research variables. Table 1 indicates the normality or non-normality of variables.

**Table 1: Normality Test of Research Data**

Component	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	Significance Level	Mean Error	of Result	Number
Adequate and Fair Compensation	1.689	0.067	0.05	Normal	152
Safe and Healthy Working Conditions	1.910	0.076	0.05	Normal	152
Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacities	1.754	0.085	0.05	Normal	152
Opportunity for Career Growth	1.959	0.082	0.05	Normal	152
Social Integration in the Workforce	2.206	0.062	0.05	Normal	152
Constitutionalism in the Work Organization	1.876	0.079	0.05	Normal	152
General Work and Life Atmosphere	1.896	0.068	0.05	Normal	152
Social Relevance of Work Life	1.466	0.085	0.05	Normal	152
Quality of Work Life	0.917	0.067	0.05	Normal	152
Component	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	Significance Level	Mean Error	of Result	Number
Quiescent Silence	0.871	0.056	0.05	Normal	152
Opportunistic Silence	1.430	0.072	0.05	Normal	152
Prosocial Silence	1.023	0.077	0.05	Normal	152
Acquiescent Silence	0.860	0.066	0.05	Normal	152
Organizational Silence	0.769	0.087	0.05	Normal	152

*Reference: Research Data*

Since the significance levels of all variables were greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normal. Therefore, given the normality of data, Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used to test the hypotheses. According to Table 2, all of the research hypotheses were proved at a confidence level of 99%. It means that there were significant relationships between all of the components of organizational silence and quality of work life pertaining to the auditors working at Supreme Audit Court in the West of Iran.



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**Table 2: Pearson's Test Results**

Research Variables	Quality of Work Life
Organizational Silence	-0.697
Acquiescent Silence	-0.798
Quiescent Silence	-0.797
Prosocial Silence	0.768
Opportunistic Silence	-0.797

Reference: Research Data

## Research Validity

### Validity of Variable Dimensions of Quality of Work Life

According to Table 3, the LISREL output for the calculated value of  $X^2$  is 600.10, lowness of which indicates the slight difference between the research model and research data. Moreover, the value of RMSEA is 0.074, which shows the goodness of fit. The permissible limit of RMSEA is 0.08; if this value exceeds the permissible number, it would be due to the fact that there were too few samples. Fitting indices of GFI and AGFI refers to the size of relative values of variances and covariance which can be justified by model in a common way. The closer this value is to one, the more appropriate data fitting will be. This index does not depend on the sample size. In this case, these values are appropriately 0.91 and 0.95.

**Table 4: Goodness of Fit Indices for the Model of Measuring Quality of Work Life Dimensions**

Factor	CHI-SQUARE	DF	P-VALUE	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI
Quality of Work Life	600.10	271	0.00000	0.074	0.95	0.91

Reference: Research Data

### Validity of Variable Dimensions of Organizational Silence

According to Table 5, the LISREL output for the calculated value of  $X^2$  was 393.83, lowness of which indicates the slight difference between the research model and research data. Moreover, the value of RMSEA was 0.063, which shows the goodness of fit. The permissible limit of RMSEA is 0.08, if this value exceeds the permissible number, it would be due to the fact that there were too few samples. Fitting indices of GFI and AGFI refer to the size of relative values of variances and covariance which can be justified by model in a common way. The closer this value is to one, the more appropriate data fitting will be. This index does not depend on the sample size. In this case, these values are appropriately 0.91 and 0.95.

**Table 5: Goodness of Fit Indices for the Model of Measuring Organizational Silence Dimensions**

Factor	CHI-SQUARE	DF	P-VALUE	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI
Organizational Silence	393.83	164	0.00000	0.063	0.95	0.91

Reference: Research Data

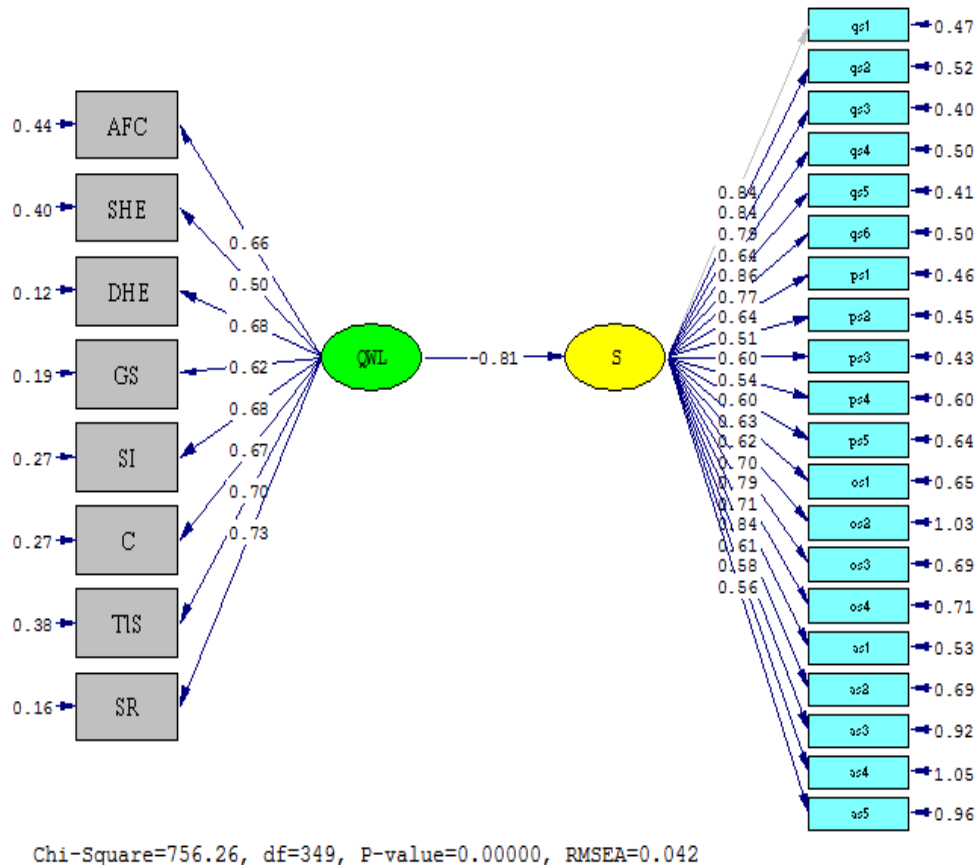
## Testing the Main Hypothesis through Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling was used to test the main hypothesis. It is a very general and powerful multivariate analytical technique, taken from the family of multivariate regression, which enables the researcher to test a set of regression equations simultaneously.

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### Main Hypothesis

Figure 5 indicates the research structural modeling in the standard estimate mode. According to this figure, the correlation coefficient between quality of work life and organizational silence is -0.81.



**Figure 5: Structural Equation Modeling in the Standard Estimation Mode**

### Quality of Work Life

Auditors' viewpoints were taken into account to investigate the quality of work life condition in the organization. The following results indicate the mean and the standard deviation pertaining to each factor.

**Table 6: Statistical Indices Pertaining to the Factors of Quality of Work Life**

Factor	Quantity	Min	Max	Domain	Mean	SD
Adequate and Fair Compensation	152	1.35	5	3.65	3.102	0.712
Safe and Healthy Working Condition	152	1.35	5	3.5	3.271	0.617
Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacities	152	1	5	4	2.980	0.726
Opportunity for Career Growth	152	1	4.70	3.70	3.280	0.567
Social Integration in the Work Force	152	1	4.82	3.82	3.105	0.665
Constitutionalism in the Work Organization	152	1	4.90	3.90	3.121	0.618
General Work and Life Atmosphere	152	1	5	4	2.701	0.763
Social Relevance of Work Life	152	1	5	4	2.564	0.818

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According to this table, Opportunity for Career Growth and Safe and Healthy Working Condition had the highest means among other factors.

**Table 7: Statistical Indices Pertaining to the Quality of Work Life**

Factor	Quantity	Min	Max	Domain	Mean	SD
Quality of Work Life	152	2.23	4.38	2.15	3.87	0.429

Generally, according to auditors working at the Supreme Audit Court in the West of Iran, quality of work life achieved a score of 3.87 out of 5, which indicates good conditions.

### Organizational Silence

Auditors' viewpoints were taken into account to investigate organizational silence condition. The following results indicate the mean, standard deviation, and other statistics pertaining to the factors constituting organizational silence.

**Table 8: Statistical Indices Pertaining to the Factors of Organizational Silence**

Factor	Quantity	Min	Max	Domain	Mean	SD
Quiescent Silence	152	1	5	4	3.24	0.74
Opportunistic Silence	152	1	5	4	2.64	0.96
Prosocial Silence	152	1.63	5	3.37	3.69	0.64
Acquiescent Silence	152	2	5	3	2.87	0.85

According to this table, Prosocial Silence and Quiescent Silence had the highest means among the factors constituting organizational silence.

**Table 9: Statistical Indices Pertaining to Organizational Silence**

Factor	Quantity	Min	Max	Domain	Mean	SD
Organizational Silence	152	1.40	5	3.6	3.03	0.632

Generally, according to auditors, organizational silence was evaluated to be in moderate conditions with a score of 3.03 out of 5.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence among employees. The results of testing primary and secondary hypotheses indicated that all of the assumed relationships were proved. Put another way, there was no evidence to reject the four sub-hypotheses indicating the relationships between quality of work life and organizational silence dimensions such as acquiescent, quiescent, prosocial and opportunistic silences. It means that if auditors' quality of work life conditions is further improves, the level of silence would decrease. According to the results, employees can bear satisfactory personalities when quality of work life includes adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capacities through job independence, and opportunity to use various skills. It should also provide a groundwork for job planning, future opportunities for career growth, constant security and social integration in the organization.

Therefore, employees can experience self-esteem by getting rid of prejudgment, creating dynamism at workplace, solidarity among colleagues, and membership in work-supporting groups. Constitutionalism in organization can be practiced to reserve employees' rights such as privacy, freedom of speech and equality, balance between work and the general atmosphere of life so that the social relevance of work life is judged to be favorable by employees. Therefore, the dimensions of quality of work life would have significant impacts on different types of organizational silence such as acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial silence. The noteworthy point is that the research findings were considered to be experimental, i.e. they might lead to different results in future investigations.



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