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Organizational Commitment as a Mediator Between Organizational Climate and Employee Silence

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Jennifer Suzanne Sherer

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Organizational Commitment as a Mediator Between Organizational Climate and
Employee Silence

by

Jennifer Suzanne Sherer

M.Ed., Texas Christian University, 2003

BS, Texas Christian University, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Unethical organizational behavior negatively impacts organizations, and despite the benefits of whistleblowing, some employees are hesitant to report employee misconduct. The specific research problem examined factors that influence employee silence when confronted with employee misconduct. Prior researchers have explored how organizational climate and organizational commitment can contribute to or inhibit the decision to report misconduct. What remained unclear is how these factors may interact on their influence on employee silence. The purpose of this study was to examine whether organizational commitment mediated the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. The theoretical foundations for this study were the social information processing theory, which posited that individuals adapt their perceptions of an environment based on contextual clues, and the conservation of resources theory, which suggested that individual behavior results from a desire to maintain and protect one's resources. Data were collected for this quantitative study by administering an online survey to 142 employees who were aware of unethical organizational behavior and chose to remain silent. Mediation analyses using PROCESS were conducted to analyze the data. Results indicate that organizational climate indirectly influenced employee silence via organizational commitment. However, the type of commitment impacted whether employees were more or less likely to remain silent. Positive social change can result from the potential to create more positive workplaces that encourage employees to report misconduct before they negatively alter the work environment.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Kyle Sherer, who knew that I would get a Ph.D. early in our relationship. Your support and encouragement propelled me through difficult times and reminded me that we can make our dreams a reality together.

Additionally, I dedicate this dissertation to my two sons, Aiden and CJ Sherer, who patiently accepted the craziness pursuing this degree brought into our lives. As we progressed through school together, seeing your dedication to your homework provided further motivation for me to stay on top of my own studies.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jim and Karen Wald. Your early commitment to my education that started me on this journey. You never questioned nor doubted that I would end up here, and you provided the foundation for me to achieve this honored accomplishment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Unethical organizational behavior can lead to eye-popping headlines that depict employees, if not the entire organization, in anything but flattering terms. Consequences from such behavior can include a decrease in overall productivity (Dong & Chung, 2020) and financial losses and reputational damage that can take years to overcome (Patra, 2016). Scandals such as the Volkswagen emissions deception and Wells Fargo account scam involved employees at all levels and demonstrate how widespread misconduct can be throughout an organization (van Rooij & Fine, 2018). This then raises the question of what factors may lead employees to remain silent to the point where unethical behavior permeates the organization? The answer is as complex as the question, with organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors contributing to why employees may remain silent when confronted with misconduct (Chou & Chang, 2020).

Understanding how various factors may interact to promote employee silence can contribute to positive social change by identifying strategies to combat reporting barriers. In turn, this can create a safer work environment and minimize organizational loss. I addressed a gap in the literature to explore how organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. The following sections will summarize prior research, explain the problem and purpose of the study, and describe the parameters and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a description of potential implications for social change.

Background of the Study

In nearly any work environment, opportunities exist for employees to engage in various forms of unethical behavior. Considered to be behavior that goes against “generally accepted moral norms of behavior” (Trevino et al., 2006, p. 952), unethical organizational behavior can occur in various industries from healthcare (Blenkinsopp et al., 2019) and government settings (Borry, 2017; Jeon, 2017) to profit and nonprofit organizations (Scheetz & Wilson, 2019). Unethical behavior can be targeted against other employees or the organization as a whole (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Employee misconduct can lead to significant financial losses (Patra, 2016), and if issues are left unaddressed, can create an unhealthy or unsafe work environment (Park et al., 2020; van Rooij & Fine, 2018). Given the widespread nature and potential consequences, the reality of employee misconduct is an issue that organizational leaders not only need to be aware of but actively consider how to address and minimize unethical organizational behavior. As leaders cannot be in all places at all times, relying on employees to raise concerns can be one method of being informed of issues before they escalate into large-scale problems.

Being aware that an issue exists is the first step in identifying solutions that can improve the situation. Whistleblowing involves reporting unethical or illegal behavior to individuals who employees believe can make a difference in rectifying the misconduct (Near & Miceli, 1985). Researchers have identified several benefits of whistleblowing to organizations, such as the immediate identification of misconduct (Andon et al., 2018), protection against negative consequences resulting from misconduct (Latan et al., 2021), the detection of organizational inefficiencies to improve operations (Skivenes &

Trygstad, 2017), and the ability to resolve issues internally before they impact those external to the organization (Near & Miceli, 2016). Whistleblowing is a critical step in bringing improvements to the work environment, which can also positively impact employees. However, regardless of any cumulative benefits whistleblowing may entail, other factors can negatively influence the reporting decision.

While reporting misconduct would be a direct method for addressing unethical organizational behavior, some employees may respond to the misconduct of others by remaining silent. Contrasted with whistleblowing, employee silence is withholding information regarding organizational concerns from those capable of effecting change (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Various factors such as fear, disengagement, self-defense, or protecting others can sway employees to remain silent rather than voicing concerns (Knoll & van Dick, 2013; Rai & Agarwal, 2018; Van Dyne et al., 2003). These various factors can then lead to different forms of silence, including acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). The context in which the misconduct occurs is also of great importance, as employees learn from others the acceptability of certain behaviors and potential responses to reporting (Kaptein, 2020). Because of the numerous factors influencing the decision process, a closer examination of the work environment can provide insight into what might lead employees to blow the whistle or remain silent.

The environment in which employees work is not a vacuum void of emotion but reflects the perceptions and behaviors of the organizational population. As various beliefs and actions become more normalized and accepted, a distinct organizational climate

emerges which influences interactions and operations within that environment (Schneider, 1975). The norms and expectations salient to the organizational climate can then influence whether or not employees remain silent. Taylor and Curtis (2018) found that employees are more likely to report misconduct when they feel supported and trust those receiving the report. Conversely, in organizational climates where misconduct is normalized or contain communication barriers, employees may remain silent out of fear or resignation (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019b; Gan, 2020; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; van Rooij & Fine, 2018). As employees recognize the potential impact of reporting, they may find that remaining silent is a better option given their circumstances. However, employees are not at the sole directive of others, and even when opportunities may encourage whistleblowing, personal attitudes towards the organization may further influence the reporting decision.

While individuals may need to work, many have some control over where they work and whether they stay with the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) explained how organizational commitment reflects the relationship employees have with their employer and the extent to which they may remain with the organization. While some researchers have suggested that high levels of organizational commitment correlate with an increased intention to report misconduct (Cintya & Yustina, 2019; Taylor & Curtis, 2018; Verschuuren, 2020), Knoll and Redman (2016) found that pro-organizational attitudes may not be sufficient in and of themselves to overcome the benefits of remaining silent. There is a gap of knowledge related to the extent of influence organizational commitment may have in the reporting decision, particularly as a

mediating factor between organizational climate and employee silence. I examined how organizational and individual factors may interact as they influence employee silence.

Problem Statement

The specific research problem this study addressed is that it is unclear why some employees remain silent when confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others. Addressing misconduct before it becomes a major organizational issue benefits the company and employees alike, enabling leaders to make improvements that will better the company (Near & Miceli, 2016). Despite the long-term benefits that can result from reporting misconduct, many employees choose to remain silent. Previous researchers have examined how organizational climate can influence the reporting decision through the availability of appropriate reporting channels and effectively handling reports (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019b; Johansson & Carey, 2016). However, how committed employees are to their team, workgroup, or organization can complicate the reporting decision and influence how likely they are to remain silent (Doe et al., 2020; Qian et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2018). What is unclear is how organizational commitment may mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. Organizational climate was the predictor variable, and organizational commitment was the mediating variable. The criterion variable was employee silence. The nature of the organizational climate can either inhibit or promote reporting unethical

organizational behavior. The organizational climate can contribute to a collective acceptance of unethical behavior (Jacobson et al., 2020) and negatively influence the extent to which employees may be willing to report such information (Kaptein, 2020). Alternatively, an organizational climate that fosters caring and respect can encourage employees to report misconduct (Taylor & Curtis, 2018). However, even when policies are in place to protect whistleblowers, such policies may not be sufficient to encourage employees to report misconduct (Chordiya et al., 2020). Surveys were administered to individuals who witnessed some form of unethical behavior in the workplace but chose to remain silent to investigate whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Despite any benefits that may come out of identifying unethical organizational behavior, employees may be hesitant to report the misconduct of others in the workplace. Organizational climates that discourage communication and promote personal interests over the collective good can negatively impact reporting decisions (Chou & Chang, 2020). Likewise, if employees voice concerns, fear of unintended consequences can render silence (Knoll & Redman, 2016). Zhan (2020) proposed that organizational commitment can influence employee silence dependent on the perceived outcomes of protecting the organization and maintaining workplace relationships. Because organizational climate and organizational commitment can have different influences on the whistleblowing decision, further research is needed to understand how these variables may interact to influence the four forms of employee silence discussed by Knoll and van

Dick (2013): acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial. The authors defined acquiescent silence as a passive acceptance of the situation; quiescent silence as remaining silent out of fear; opportunistic silence, which is remaining silent for personal gain; and prosocial silence as remaining silent to protect others. Organizational commitment was the mediating variable to examine whether it mediates the relationship between the predictor variable of organizational climate and the criterion variable of employee silence, specifically focusing on four forms of employee silence: acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial silence. The study addressed the following research questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence?

H₀1: Organizational commitment (1a: affective; 1b: continuance; 1c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence.

H_A1: Organizational commitment (1a: affective; 1b: continuance; 1c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence.

Research Question 2: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence?

H₀2: Organizational commitment (2a: affective; 2b: continuance; 2c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence.

H_A2: Organizational commitment (2a: affective; 2b: continuance; 2c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence.

Research Question 3: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence?

H₀3: Organizational commitment (3a: affective; 3b: continuance; 3c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence.

H_A3: Organizational commitment (3a: affective; 3b: continuance; 3c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence.

Research Question 4: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence?

H₀4: Organizational commitment (4a: affective; 4b: continuance; 4c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

H_A4: Organizational commitment (4a: affective; 4b: continuance; 4c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

Theoretical Foundation

The social information processing and conservation of resources theories guided this study. When learning what is considered acceptable behavior and what others' responses may be in various social situations, individuals are likely to rely on the influence of others (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Furthermore, because of the various demands in their lives, employees may be motivated to act in a self-protective manner (Hobfoll, 1989). This study extended from these theories to examine how organizational climate and organizational commitment may influence employee silence.

Social Information Processing Theory

As a social system, the actions of employees will be both influenced by and impact those within the work environment. According to the social information processing theory, the social environment provides context to identify group norms and shared values, thus providing the necessary direction to influence personal behavior (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). When faced with a difficult decision within a work environment, employees rely on the social culture to assess the costs and benefits of various outcomes (Hsiung & Tsai, 2017). The nature of the organizational climate helps employees consider how whistleblowing may be accepted within the organization, which can influence reporting behaviors (Chordiya et al., 2020). Given the social nature of the work system, the social information processing theory provided the foundation for examining the influence of the surrounding environment on individual behavior. Identifying how reporting behaviors may be perceived can influence whether or not to remain silent, particularly when employees are also trying to protect their own interests.

Conservation of Resources Theory

Work environments can be demanding, particularly when employees must identify how to balance competing life-work goals. In the conservation of resources theory, Hobfoll (1989) posited that individuals are motivated to attain, maintain, and protect resources, which then influences how they act in various situations. As resources are drained, individuals may find it more difficult to replenish necessary resources, leading to a cycle of deprivation that can negatively influence behavior (Hobfoll et al., 2018). As a means to protect what few resources they may have in the work environment, employees may remain silent in the face of unethical organizational behavior (Wu et al., 2018). From the lens of the conservation of resources theory, I examined whether silence is a strategy employees use to protect themselves within the organizational climate, particularly given their level of organizational commitment.

Nature of the Study

I used quantitative analyses for this study. A quantitative approach is appropriate when the purpose of the study is to examine the extent to which variables may influence each other (Babbie, 2017). Quantitative methods have been used in prior research to understand factors that may predict employee silence (see Hassan et al., 2019; Knoll & Redman, 2016; Qian et al., 2021). Additionally, consistent with prior research in which mediation analyses were used (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019a; Mignonac et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020), data were collected via surveys. Surveys are an effective method to systematically gather data from a sample to describe a phenomenon of the larger population (Groves et al., 2009).

Surveys were administered to employees who were aware of unethical behaviors committed by others within the organization but chose not to report the behavior. Unethical behavior consists of behaviors that go against “generally accepted moral norms of behavior” (Trevino et al., 2006, p. 952). Brass et al. (1998) likewise posited that unethical behavior is largely socially determined because of its impact on others. In an organizational setting, identifying unethical behavior can be further complicated as some behaviors may be consistent with organizational norms but go against moral codes or societal norms (Helle et al., 2018). Because there is some subjectivity in how individuals perceive ethical versus unethical behavior, participants were not presented with a predetermined list. Instead, participants self-determined whether they witnessed or became aware of unethical behavior based on their moral principles.

The surveys administered to participants first measured their perceptions of the organizational ethical climate. According to Schneider (1975), organizational climate is the shared perceptions employees have of the work environment that are both influenced by and influence employee behavior. The manner in which organizational norms influence the resolution of ethical dilemmas indicates the ethical nature of that organizational climate (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Next, the survey included questions about their organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is the extent to which an employee is willing to maintain employment with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The authors described three types of organizational commitment: affective commitment extends from a positive connection with the organization, continuance commitment involves remaining with the organization out of fear of what could be lost if

they left, and normative commitment reflects staying out of a sense of obligation. The final part of the survey presented factors that may have influenced their decision to remain silent in response to becoming aware of unethical organizational behavior. Employee silence is intentionally withholding information regarding organizational issues from those who are in a position to address them (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Knoll and van Dick (2013) identified four specific types of employee silence that will be measured in the survey. The authors described acquiescent silence, which is a passive acceptance of the situation; quiescent silence or remaining silent out of fear; opportunistic silence, which is remaining silent for personal gain; and prosocial silence or remaining silent to protect others.

I expected to analyze the data using structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM has been used by other researchers when examining mediation effects (see Brink et al., 2018; Chou & Chang, 2021; Qian et al., 2021). Warner (2013) identified two notable advantages for using SEM when testing for mediation. First, the method provides bootstrapped confidence intervals, which is a highly reliable method to test the statistical significance of the indirect effects. Second, Warner indicated that SEM is an efficient mechanism to analyze a model with multiple variables, which will be useful for the proposed study because of the four forms of employee silence (acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial) that make up the model. Examining how organizational climate and organizational commitment may uniquely influence the specific forms of employee silence may provide further insight into whether particular forms of silence are more salient in specific settings.

Definitions

Employee Silence: Employee silence is defined as “the withholding of any form of genuine expression about the individual's behavioral, cognitive and~or affective evaluations of his or her organizational circumstances to persons who are perceived to be capable of effecting change or redress” (Pinder & Harlos, 2001, p. 334).

- *Acquiescent Silence:* Acquiescent silence is based on a passive acceptance of one’s situation and stems from the belief that nothing will change even if the employee voiced concerns (Knoll & van Dick, 2013).
- *Opportunistic Silence:* Opportunistic silence is described as remaining silent for personal gains or benefit (Knoll & van Dick, 2013).
- *Prosocial Silence:* Prosocial silence occurs when employees remain silent based on altruistic motives to help others or the organization (Van Dyne et al., 2003)
- *Quiescent Silence:* Quiescent silence results from remaining silent due to fear of consequences (Knoll & van Dick, 2013).

Organizational Climate: Organizational climate is defined as “descriptions that people can agree characterize a system's practices and procedures” (Schneider, 1975, p. 474).

- *Ethical Organizational Climate:* Ethical organizational climate results from the organizational norms that influence how to resolve ethical dilemmas (Victor & Cullen, 1988).

Organizational Commitment: Organizational commitment is defined as “a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67).

- *Affective Commitment:* Affective commitment is a specific type of organizational commitment in which employees remain with the organization due to “an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Meyer et al., 1998, p. 83).
- *Continuance Commitment:* Continuance commitment is a specific type of organizational commitment that results from a cost-benefit analysis in which the employee remains with the organization, having determined that leaving would involve too high a cost (Meyer & Allen, 1991).
- *Normative Commitment:* Normative commitment is a specific type of organizational commitment characterized by remaining with the organization out of a sense of obligation (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Unethical Behavior: Unethical behavior is behavior that goes against “generally accepted moral norms of behavior” (Trevino et al., 2006, p. 952).

Unethical Organizational Behavior: This is a specific type of behavior that goes against acceptable moral norms, which occurs specifically in a workplace setting (Trevino et al., 2014).

Whistleblowing: Whistleblowing is defined as “the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control

of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action” (Near & Miceli, 1985, p. 4).

Assumptions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. This was a quantitative, correlational study in which surveys were administered to examine the relationship among variables. It was assumed that the surveys used to measure the variables would yield accurate data, as each survey has been validated and used in prior research (see Aryati et al., 2018; Bormann & Rowold, 2016; Knoll et al., 2019; Knoll & van Dick, 2013; Meyer et al., 1993; Victor & Cullen, 1988). It was also assumed that using an online survey would be an efficient mechanism to collect data from a geographically diverse population.

The population for this study were employees who were aware of some form of employee misconduct and chose not to report the behavior. It was assumed that individuals only completed the online survey if they met the inclusion criteria. Finally, the topic under study was more sensitive. However, due to the anonymity of the online survey, it was assumed that participants responded to the survey questions truthfully.

Scope and Delimitations

I examined two factors that may provide insight into why employees do not blow the whistle, even though reporting may be in the organization's best interest. Specifically, I focused on how organizational commitment may mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. Previous researchers have separately

explored organizational climate (Jiang & Yao, 2020; Kiewitz et al., 2016; Knoll & van Dick, 2013) and organizational commitment (Knoll & Redman, 2016; Qian et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2020) as factors that influence employee silence. However, the possible role organizational commitment may have in mediating the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence is unclear. Furthermore, prior research has also described other factors that may influence employee silence, such as abusive supervision (Mannan & Kashif, 2020; Park et al., 2018), burnout (Sherf et al., 2021), job satisfaction (Knoll & van Dick, 2013), nature of the wrongdoing (Keil et al., 2018; Kirrane et al., 2017), and trust (Dedahanov et al., 2016; Dong & Chung, 2020). It is, therefore, possible that other factors may contribute to why participants in this study remained silent when confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others, but those are beyond the scope of this study.

The only criteria that employees were required to meet to participate in this study were that they were aware of unethical organizational behavior and remained silent. Participants did not need to be currently employed with the organization where the misconduct occurred, as some employees may have left as a way to deal with the situation (Monzani et al., 2016). To potentially increase the generalizability of the results, the survey was available to employees from any organization type, position, or hierarchy within the organization. Respondents needed access to the internet, as the survey was only administered online as a cost-efficient method to reach a geographically diverse population (Babbie, 2017).

Limitations

Deciding whether to blow the whistle or remain silent when confronted with unethical organizational behavior can be a sensitive issue. When asking participants to self-report, there may be a tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner (Alleyne et al., 2019). Valentine and Godkin (2019) posited that social desirability can be of particular concern in studies involving ethical decision-making, as results may be skewed based on how participants want to be viewed rather than their actual perceptions and behaviors. Some researchers suggest administering a social desirability scale to directly control for social desirability bias (Scheetz & Wilson, 2019; Valentine & Godkin, 2019). However, because of the length of the other surveys that were used in this study, I determined not to add another measure. Instead, to minimize this potential for bias, I administered the surveys anonymously, such that no identifiers were collected, nor can any data be traced to any specific participant. This is consistent with research conducted by Ghosh (2017), who used anonymous methods to encourage honest responses.

Another potential limitation of the study is lowered validity due to how participants completed the survey. Ward et al. (2017) described how online surveys are particularly susceptible to early withdrawal and careless responses, leading to misrepresentations in variable correlations. The use of online surveys enables researchers to minimize the opportunity for participants to provide extraneous or irrelevant information but can limit options when respondents prefer not to respond to various questions (Groves et al., 2009). To address these concerns, I timed myself completing the surveys to estimate the time needed to complete the surveys and set realistic expectations.

I also included a completion indicator as part of the survey so participants could see how close they were to finishing.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will advance knowledge in the field, contribute to organizational practice, and promote positive social change. The significance of the study relative to each of these contributions is described in the following sections.

Significance to Theory

As employee silence is a complex construct that extends beyond just not speaking up (Pinder & Harlos, 2001), it stands to reason that there could be various antecedents that influence an employee's decision to report misconduct. Chou and Chang (2020) explained how factors influencing employee silence can be grouped into organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels. It is the intersection of these levels and extending the knowledge of how they may interact when influencing employee silence that serves as the focus of this study.

When unethical organizational behavior occurs, it happens in some type of social context. Through the social norms and expectations of this social context, employees learn how to behave and respond to various organizational situations (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). In organizations driven by climates that tolerate or even condone unethical behavior, employees can quickly learn that a safer course of action is to remain silent (Harlos & Knoll, 2018). Remaining silent is a way of coping with a difficult situation by conserving one's available resources and potentially protecting against further loss (He et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Employee silence can result when

perceived as the least threatening of difficult choices. However, employee misconduct does not only occur in unethical organizational climates, and employees in organizations that actively encourage reporting also face difficult decisions when confronted with the unethical behavior of others.

An ethical organizational climate can encourage reporting misconduct by fostering trust and an expectation of open communication (Taylor & Curtis, 2018). However, Chordiya et al. (2020) found that even when organizations provided sufficient protection and channels for whistleblowing, many employees continued to have reservations about reporting misconduct. Nevertheless, even if leaders can create ideal conditions to encourage reporting and potentially minimize the effects of unethical organizational behavior, they will still need to contend with other factors that can influence the employee's decision. One such factor could be the employee's level of organizational commitment.

As organizational commitment reflects why employees may remain with a company (Meyer & Allen, 1991), the extent to which employees desire to maintain employment with that organization could also influence employee silence. Verschuuren (2020) found that employees high in organizational commitment and identification will blow the whistle to protect the integrity of the organization. However, Doe et al. (2020) highlighted the multifaceted nature of organizational commitment, noting that relationships with others can be a critical factor contributing to commitment levels, thus leading some employees to remain silent to protect the existing environment. Therefore, further research is needed to understand the influence of organizational commitment on

employee silence, particularly given the organizational climate. This study will add to the body of knowledge to provide further insight into how organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Significance to Practice

While some instances of organizational misconduct can lead to front-page headlines, unethical organizational behavior can occur in less notorious fashions. Deviant behavior can range from minor misconduct, such as wasting company resources, to serious ethical offenses such as stealing from the company or harming others (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). When confronted with the unethical behavior of others, employees typically will report their concerns internally within the organization (Near & Miceli, 2016; Taylor, 2018). An ethical organizational climate can help set behavioral expectations and the necessary support to foster reporting misconduct (Aydan & Kaya, 2018; Taylor & Curtis, 2018; Wright et al., 2016). However, the existence of an ethical organizational climate in and of itself may not be sufficient to encourage the actual whistleblowing behavior (Chordiya et al., 2020), nor do all employees have the luxury of working in environments with clearly stipulated ethical expectations.

Given the social nature of the workplace, employees also need to consider the potential impact of reporting unethical organizational behavior. Concerns about whether the report would create necessary change (Kaptein, 2020; Scheetz & Fogarty, 2019) and the possibility of retaliation (Credo et al., 2016; Yang & Xu, 2020) can contribute to employee silence. The decision of whether to report misconduct can be further complicated by the employee's level of organizational commitment. Verschuuren (2020)

found that employees high in organizational commitment may blow the whistle when doing so protects the integrity of the organization. However, factors that can foster organizational commitment, such as personal relationships or workplace tenure, can negatively influence reporting decisions when faced with competing values (Monzani et al., 2016; Palumbo & Manna, 2020). Thus, given the organizational climate, understanding how organizational commitment may contribute to employee silence can inform leaders about potential barriers to whistleblowing that may be more specific to their organization. Leaders can use the results from this study to develop tailored strategies that account for organizational, relational, and individual factors to overcome reporting impediments.

Significance to Social Change

Individual acts of misconduct may have minimal impact at the time, but as those acts increase in frequency or severity, it can be challenging to rectify those behaviors before causing widespread damage. In their review of the BP oil explosion, Volkswagen emissions deception, and the Wells Fargo fake account scam, van Rooij and Fine (2018) found in all three companies a willingness to accept unethical or illegal behavior at all levels throughout the organization. Such findings are consistent with the assertion of Near and Miceli (2016), who explained that leaders often create environments that leave employees few options related to addressing organizational misconduct. Whether employees are actively complicit in the wrongdoings or passively accept the established organizational norms, the result is the continuation of unethical behavior. Over time, this can lead to financial losses and a loss of public trust, thus making it more difficult for the

organization to recover (Patra, 2016). Not only can unethical behavior lead to external challenges, but the consequences can also negatively impact the organization internally.

The extent to which unethical behavior is accepted throughout the organization can further create unsafe work environments and increases the potential for retaliation against those who do not follow the organizational norms (Park et al., 2020). Prolonged exposure to environments where employees feel compelled to remain silent can lead to stress and decreased performance (Dong & Chung, 2020). Positive social change can result from the potential to create more positive workplaces for employees. Better understanding factors contributing to employee silence can enable organizational leaders to proactively create environments that encourage reporting unethical behavior before they negatively alter the organizational climate.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 1, I discussed the hesitancy employees might have in blowing the whistle despite the potential benefits that can result from reporting unethical organizational behavior. Through a brief overview of the literature, the concepts of organizational climate and organizational commitment and their possible influence on employee silence were described. I further explained how there are different forms of employee silence and introduced the four forms of employee silence that were included in this study: acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial. This study addressed a gap in the literature on whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence, as reflected in the research questions and hypotheses. The conservation of resources and social information

processing theories were introduced to explain the theoretical foundations from which this study was based. I also explained that data were collected by administering online surveys and that I expected to analyze the data using SEM. Specific assumptions, delimitations, and potential limitations were also described. Finally, I explained the significance of the study, noting how it will add to the body of knowledge and contribute to organizational practice and social change by providing further information on factors that may contribute to employee silence.

Building on what was introduced in Chapter 1, I will describe the theoretical foundation in greater detail and provide a synthesis of the literature related to the concepts and variables in this study. After a brief explanation of the literature search strategy, I will provide an overview of the conservation of resources and social information processing theories and their relevance to this study. Through a review of the literature, I will describe the detrimental effects of unethical organizational behavior and the challenges associated with reporting such misconduct. I will further discuss prior research on factors that can influence employee silence, focusing specifically on organizational climate and organizational commitment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Unethical organizational behavior occurs in organizations of all kinds. Negative consequences of such behavior can lead to financial repercussions, loss of revenue, and lower employee morale (Near & Miceli, 2016). While some misconduct is localized to an individual employee, other behaviors are pervasive throughout the organization. The Volkswagen emissions and Wells Fargo fake account scandals highlight the extent to which unethical behavior can occur at multiple organizational levels and ultimately draw in more employees to maintain desired outcomes (Kuenzi et al., 2020; Monzani et al., 2016; Patra, 2016; van Rooij & Fine, 2018). Yet, not all employees may agree with such unethical organizational behaviors. Though they may not actively promote the misconduct, they do nothing to stop it through their silence. The research problem this study addressed is that it is unclear why some employees remain silent when confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others.

In the following section, I will present a review of prior literature regarding unethical organizational behavior and specific factors that can influence whether to blow the whistle or remain silent. Prior research has explored the influence of organizational climate on employee silence (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Jiang & Yao, 2020; Scheetz & Fogarty, 2019). However, one's surrounding circumstances do not solely drive individuals, and an employee's organizational commitment could also influence the reporting decision (Cintya & Yustina, 2019; Doe et al., 2020; Verschuuren, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which

organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Literature Search Strategy

I began my literature review by searching for articles related to organizational climate, organizational commitment, and employee silence using the Thoreau database. Because organizational research spans multiple disciplines (i.e., management, psychology, healthcare, etc.), I purposefully selected the Thoreau database to enable a greater span for identifying potential articles. I also used Google Scholar to supplement my general search to look for articles not included in databases held within the Walden library. Additionally, I reviewed ScholarWorks and ProQuest to identify other research related to the constructs of this study. When conducting my literature review, I focused my search on studies within the past 5 years, specifically articles published since 2016 and from peer-reviewed journals.

From the articles retrieved from the more general search, I then used keywords to narrow the scope of the literature search. Keywords and subject terms from prior research provided various synonyms or described terms to consider, such as *ethical dissent*, *mum effect*, or *unethical organizational behavior*. Likewise, relying on search words provided direction on terms to pair with organizational climate, organizational commitment, and employee silence. I paired various keywords together to generate multiple results with terms including *acquiescent silence*, *conservation of resources*, *cynical silence*, *employee silence*, *ethical dissent*, *ethical values*, *job attitude*, *morals*, *mum effect*, *organizational climate*, *organizational commitment*, *organizational silence*, *prosocial*, *quiescent silence*,

social information processing, unethical organizational behavior, whistleblowing, whistleblowing channel, and whistleblowing intentions.

To further expand my search, I also reviewed the reference sections of articles to identify other relevant, recently-published articles and authors who were frequently cited. Likewise, I used the articles to identify seminal research and the researchers who significantly contributed to construct or theory development. Conducting this more focused search enabled me to identify articles that demonstrated how the construct or theory was developed and evolved over time. When searching for seminal literature, I expanded my search to other literature specific to those authors to identify additional works that extensively described the construct or theory.

Theoretical Foundation

The social information processing and conservation of resources theories were used to guide this study. As the workplace is typically a social environment, the social information processing theory explains how group norms and attitudes can influence behavior (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). When employees find themselves in a particularly taxing environment, the conservation of resources theory may help explain the decision-making process as employees seek to protect their available resources (Hobfoll, 1989). This study builds on these theories and examined how organizational climate and organizational commitment may influence employee silence.

Social Information Processing Theory

Unless self-employed in a one-person business, employees will work in some type of social environment and take cues from coworkers about the nature of that workplace.

According to the social information processing theory, individuals adapt their attitudes and behaviors based on the present context (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The authors further explained that individuals use the social context to inform their understanding of the situation. Thomas and Griffin (1989) posited that the workplace is not a single work environment but is constructed as employees learn through experience what components are relevant and valued by others. Employees use this environment-specific information to determine general expectations and identify acceptable responses in specific situations. Such cues can be an invaluable resource when employees attempt to determine how coworkers may react to certain behaviors within that organizational climate.

Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) suggested that from a social information processing perspective, organizational climate results from shared perceptions towards the work environment, expected outcomes, and how employees are supposed to work within that setting. However, how strongly employees hold to certain beliefs can also influence the attitudes and behaviors of others (Bommer et al., 2003). Likewise, as the number of employees who hold similar perceptions increases, it can be difficult for individual employees to act in a manner that is contrary to group norms (Jacobson et al., 2020). While employees may believe that a behavior is unethical, the context in which it occurs can influence whether they make a report or remain silent.

Given the social nature of many work environments, employees also need to consider how others may respond if they were to report unethical organizational behavior. Greenberger et al. (1987) posited that the strength of group norms can significantly impact whether an employee reports misconduct or remains silent. Frazier

and Bowler (2015) supported this position. These authors found that employees were more likely to voice concerns in climates that promoted voice behaviors due to shared beliefs. Hsiung and Tsai (2017) likewise found a greater willingness to speak up when employees perceived that voicing concerns was acceptable within that specific work context. Chordiya et al. (2020) further found that the more an ethical climate permeated the organization, the more employees perceived reports of misconduct would be taken seriously, thus increasing the likelihood of reporting behaviors. Using the contextual and social cues within their work environment, employees can consider potential benefits and consequences that could result from their reporting decision. When the work environment implicitly, or even directly, suggests that reporting unethical behavior would be received unfavorably, employees may respond by remaining silent.

When faced with a difficult decision, such as determining whether or not to report unethical organizational behavior, employees will use available cues to help identify possible consequences of a specific course of action. The social information processing theory is relevant to this study because it provides a foundation for understanding how the work environment may impact employee behavior. For example, framing their study from the lens of social information processing, Frazier and Bowler (2015) found that employees are less likely to voice concerns when group beliefs suggest that supervisors are actively working against them. Similarly, Hsiung and Tsai (2017) found that climates that promote communication and feedback can encourage employees to speak up, even when other factors could otherwise present challenges. This study builds on the social

information processing theory as I examined how the influence of others could impact employee silence, particularly within the organizational climate.

Conservation of Resources Theory

When confronted with various challenging and stressful situations, it is not uncommon for people to respond in a self-protective manner. Hobfoll (1989) developed the conservation of resources theory (COR) on the premise that people attempt to accumulate and maintain resources, and the threat of losing those resources influences how they respond to various situations. Resources can range from material objects to personal characteristics to attainable life goals (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). Hobfoll et al. (2018) explained that those with greater resources can better deal with stressful situations and more easily build upon and protect their current resources. However, the authors also discussed how resources are a limited commodity and when resources run low, employees may find it difficult to determine the best course of action. It is necessary to consider how one's perceptions of valued commodities can impact decision-making. The principles of COR can provide the context needed to understand how this protection of resources can influence one's behavior.

Hobfoll et al. (2018) summarized the four principles of COR, explaining that (a) individuals sense resource loss more than resource gain, (b) people need to accumulate resources to protect against future losses, (c) the fewer resources people have, the more valuable those resources become, and (d) as people deplete their resources, they may misuse what few resources they have left in potentially counterproductive ways. Furthermore, people low in resources may find it difficult to amass new resources and get

stuck in a cycle of continued resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1990; Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). To protect their few resources, people may develop passive coping strategies that enable them to get through a difficult situation rather than actively dealing with it (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees who work in environments that continually apply pressure or involve stressful situations may question how to respond to an additional stressor, such as learning about the unethical organizational behavior of others. As a result, they may choose to remain silent to protect themselves or because they perceive it may simply cost too much to report the behavior.

While employees may take cues from coworkers about what likely responses would be if they report unethical organizational behavior, another factor that could influence the decision process is the need to protect and retain available resources. Hobfoll (1989) posited that one's environment can deplete personal resources, leading people to make decisions based more on self-protection and protect against further loss. COR is applicable for this study because it explains why employees may remain silent despite being aware of organizational behaviors contrary to their personal ethics. Previous researchers using COR promoted organizational commitment as a resource that can protect against negative attributes, like burnout, to minimize the further loss (Wright & Hobfoll, 2004) or serve as the motivation needed to speak up to potentially add to one's cache of resources (Nisar et al., 2020). However, other researchers have also found that in destructive environments, resource loss may be so significant that employees feel their only option is to remain silent to protect what few resources they have left (Wu et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2015). COR theory relates to the current study by explaining how

organizational climates may contribute to resource loss. I further examined whether organizational commitment is a resource to use or protect in deciding whether to report unethical organizational behavior or remain silent.

Literature Review

Unethical organizational behaviors occur in various fields ranging from healthcare (Blenkinsopp et al., 2019) to corporations (Gottschalk, 2019) and from the public sector (Borry, 2017) to nonprofit organizations (Scheetz & Wilson, 2019). The decision of whether to blow the whistle or remain silent when aware of unethical organizational behavior is no simple process. Factors such as the nature of the offense, who committed the wrongdoing, and available reporting channels can all influence the decision process (Near & Miceli, 1985). Near and Miceli (2016) suggested that whistleblowing can help minimize lost revenue, protect against reputational damage, and enable leaders to address unethical behavior before it becomes part of the organizational culture. Despite the value to organizations, employees may be hesitant to report the misconduct of others. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) noted that organizational climate can influence employee behaviors, particularly within a highly cohesive group. While the organizational climate could serve as a barrier to reporting, it remains unclear what influence organizational commitment may have in mediating the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Unethical Organizational Behavior

Establishing what could be considered unethical organizational behavior is challenging, as it can involve different forms. Trevino et al. (2006) noted that in

organizational research, various labels have been used when referring to negative employee behavior such as “organizational misconduct, misbehavior, deviance, and counterproductive behavior, among other labels” (p. 972) with a noticeable overlap in terms. For example, Robinson and Bennett (1995) indicated that deviance is behavior that goes against established organizational norms with the intent of hurting others or the organization in some way, which can encompass minor infractions and serious ethical offenses. When describing counterproductive behavior, Fox et al. (2001) noted that such behavior is meant to negatively interfere with organizational processes. Given the overlap among terms, terms such as *deviance* or *misconduct* are used interchangeably with unethical organizational behavior. Furthermore, describing misconduct solely from the perspective of the apparent harm to the organization would be an incomplete explanation, as some employees engage in unethical behavior to benefit the organization.

While many deviant behaviors may hurt, undermine, or impede other employees or the organization overall, some employees may commit unethical organizational behaviors in a misdirected effort to benefit the organization. Unethical pro-organizational behavior involves acts that promote the interests of the organization, often at the expense of those external to the organization (Yan et al., 2021; Zhang & Yao, 2019). Employees who have a strong sense of leader identification may engage in unethical pro-organizational behavior if they perceive that their supervisor will look favorably upon them for doing so (Zhang et al., 2018). Likewise, employees who are highly attached to or strongly identify with the organization may react to organizational uncertainty by doing whatever it takes to reach company goals and secure their own positions (Kong,

2016; Lawrence & Kacmar, 2016). Regardless of intention or motivation, unethical organizational behavior encompasses many actions that can negatively impact those within and outside of the organization. Understanding factors that may contribute to misconduct can inform on how to address, if not prevent, such behaviors before they tarnish the organization.

There are myriad reasons why employees may engage in unethical organizational behaviors. Employees may engage in unethical behaviors by accident, for personal gain, or even to help others (Near & Miceli, 2016). Personal motives to move ahead or obtain certain organizational rewards can lead some employees to engage in deviant behaviors (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016). Misconduct can also result from an employee's attachment to the organization and seek to ensure its long-term success (Kong, 2016; Zhang & Yao, 2019). The organization itself can contribute to unethical behaviors, as a climate that tolerates or even actively promotes such actions can instill in employees a sense that they are entitled to do what it takes to meet organizational goals (van Rooij & Fine, 2018). While employees may not have intentionally set out to engage in behaviors that can harm others or damage the organization, the culmination of means, opportunity, and perhaps even implicit organizational acceptance can significantly influence employees' decisions. Regardless of what initially led to the unethical behavior, employees will learn what behaviors are tolerated based on the response from coworkers or organizational leaders.

When a specific instance of misconduct fails to be addressed, employees may continue to test the range of what is acceptable to the extent that various forms of unethical behavior are considered part of the organizational climate. van Rooij and Fine

(2018) explained that it can be difficult for organizational leaders to find the necessary balance of helping employees learn from their mistakes while effectively addressing issues that, when left unchecked, can lead to ever-increasing unethical behaviors.

Organizational expectations can further encourage unethical behaviors as employees believe that the ends justify the means so long as predetermined goals are met (Mitchell et al., 2018). The need to achieve coupled with increased autonomy can create opportunities for employees to subtly increase the severity of unethical behaviors for their personal gain and protection (Gottschalk, 2018; Gottschalk, 2019). Whether due to ignorance or implicit acceptance, when organizational leaders do not address unethical behaviors, employees may perceive certain behaviors are not only tolerated but actively accepted, perpetuating the cycle of misconduct. While such actions may yield short-term benefits, they can lead to unintended and long-term consequences.

Unethical organizational behavior can lead to diverse consequences for employees and the organization. Direct effects can include financial losses and a lack of public trust, leading to irreparable reputational damages (Patra, 2016). As unethical behavior is left unaddressed, this can embolden employees to engage in ever-increasing acts of misconduct that can lead to unsafe and unhealthy work environments (Gläser et al., 2017; Harlos & Knoll, 2018; Park et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020). Over time, this can lead to indirect effects such as a decrease in employee morale (Fox et al., 2001), lowered organizational commitment (Hozouri et al., 2018; Near & Miceli, 2016), and a loss of productivity (Dong & Chung, 2020). Given the harm that can result from unethical organizational behavior, it is in the organization's best interest to promote the ethical

conduct of business. However, even when policies are in place that discourage unethical behaviors, the role of reporting misconduct often falls on employees who become aware of the incident.

Whistleblowing

When confronted with misconduct, one potential course of action is to report the behavior, either internally to organizational leaders or externally to other change agents. Near and Miceli (1985) defined whistleblowing as “the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action” (p. 4). Factors that can influence whistleblowing decisions include attributes of the whistleblower, who committed the offense, the nature of the offense, who would receive the report, and the potential impact of making the report (Gao & Brink, 2017; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Near & Miceli, 1985). Depending on the environment, whistleblowers can be viewed as being disloyal to an organization or actively demonstrating their loyalty by protecting the organization from actions that would cause harm (Ceva & Bocchiola, 2020; Vandekerckhove & Commers, 2004). Because of the intricacies involved, employees must weigh the perceived costs and benefits of reporting unethical behavior while simultaneously balancing personal ethics and organizational influences. Despite some short-term challenges that leaders may need to address upon receiving a misconduct report, the long-term impact of such a report often acts in the organization’s favor.

Benefits of Whistleblowing to Organizations

Because of the consequences that could result from unchecked misconduct, whistleblowing serves various functions for organizations. First, whistleblowing can alert leaders of behaviors that could cause harm and create an opportunity to fix a problem before the organization or others are hurt (Latan et al., 2021). Organizations that encourage reporting misconduct are better able to address issues internally before they turn into scandals that ultimately damage the reputation of the organization (Exmeyer, 2020; Jeon, 2017). Furthermore, whistleblowing can also lead to organizational changes that improve efficiency by identifying and addressing operational problems (Lee & Xiao, 2018; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2017). As leaders cannot be aware of every employee's actions, reporting deviant behaviors enables them to react and respond to challenging situations to protect the organization and employees. In addition to the direct effects of reporting unethical behavior, there are indirect effects that can positively impact the organization.

When whistleblowing reports are taken seriously, employees learn that they will be protected from retaliation should they need to make a report, thus increasing the likelihood that future misconduct will also be reported (Chordiya et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2020; Nawawi & Salin, 2019). Whistleblowing can help deter unethical behavior by demonstrating appropriate actions within that organization climate (Caillier, 2017a; Feltovich & Hamaguchi, 2018; Habbe et al., 2019). Taylor and Curtis (2018) posited that by creating an ethical climate, employees are more likely to report misconduct to maintain the identified organizational values. In addition to identifying employee

misconduct, whistleblowing can reinforce the importance of ethical behavior as part of an overall strategy to create and maintain an ethical workplace. While leaders can develop policies to encourage reporting misconduct, it is ultimately up to each employee to determine how to respond to unethical organizational behavior.

Characteristics of Whistleblowers

While there may be perceptions that whistleblowers are upset employees aimed at retaliating against their organization, prior research would suggest otherwise. Through years of research, Near and Miceli (2016) learned that whistleblowers typically are loyal to the organization and act in a manner to protect the organization from further harm. Other researchers support this position, indicating that organizational identification correlates with whistleblowing intentions (e.g., Liu et al., 2018; Palumbo & Manna, 2020; Smaili & Arroyo, 2019; Verschuuren, 2020). Likewise, rather than being solely motivated by personal gain, whistleblowers often act out of a personal sense of ethics in a desire to protect others (Caillier, 2017b; Hildebrand & Shawver, 2016). While Palumbo and Manna (2020) found that employees in higher organizational positions were less likely to report misconduct to maintain their position, other researchers suggested that more senior employees may be more likely to blow the whistle, believing they will be supported in such a disclosure (Chaudhary et al. 2019, Lim & Sloan, 2016; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Based on this connection to the organization it appears that whistleblowing is less of an impulsive response and more of a deliberate decision made in the organization's best interest. Given the connection that many employees have

with their organizations, the question remains as to what factors may encourage some employees to blow the whistle while other employees remain silent.

Organizational Climate

As organizations have their own values, missions, and unique employee populations, ideologies will develop that inform operational processes and relational interactions. Schneider (1975) described organizational climate as “perceptions people have of their work settings” (p. 473). The author also proposed that there are numerous organizational climates, sometimes even within a single organization, and that employee behavior will provide insight into the climate for that setting. Providing support for multiple organizational climates, Victor and Cullen (1988) further suggested that ethical climates reflect the norms within an organization that influence how employees address ethical predicaments. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) posited from a social information processing perspective that climate reflects shared perceptions of organizational values and employee expectations within that work environment. As a socially constructed concept, the values and attitudes of the group majority can heavily influence the organizational climate, which can present unique challenges to employees who may have a different perception. How strongly any single employee’s beliefs align with the group ethos and the extent to which that employee feels the need to belong can influence behavioral decisions.

When employees acculturate to a new organizational environment, group norms will identify behavioral expectations and appropriate reactions to various ethical dilemmas. In addition to identifying acceptable behaviors, group norms may influence

how employees should perceive and respond to various behaviors (Jacobson et al., 2020; Kaptein, 2020). Furthermore, the greater the strength and cohesiveness of the group, the greater influence they can have in swaying the perceptions of others (Greenberger et al., 1987). In well-established organizational climates, the influence of others can be so great that they suppress the opinions of others and create environments which do not tolerate dissent or alternative opinions (Borry, 2017; Pinder & Harlos, 2001; van Rooij & Fine, 2018). Employees working in such environments may feel that they have little choice except to comply with the established expectations. Given the potential influence of organizational climate on employee attitudes and behaviors, leaders need to monitor the environment to ensure alignment with organizational outcomes and appropriate ethical values.

While organizational climate reflects a set of shared perceptions towards the work environment, leaders have an incredible influence on maintaining that climate because of their position within the organization. Prior research has examined how leaders can directly impact the behaviors of their subordinates through their own actions, particularly through their responses to ethically challenging situations (e.g., Aryati et al., 2018; Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, 2020; Zhang et al., 2016). Leaders demonstrate the extent to which the open exchange of ideas is accepted and valued, either in supporting employees as they raise concerns (Khan et al., 2020) or by ignoring or punishing employees who challenge the status quo (Kuenzi et al., 2020). Wright et al. (2016) found that leaders can promote and strengthen an ethical organizational climate by holding employees accountable for their behaviors rather than solely focusing on outcomes. Though

employees may interact with coworkers more frequently, the leader's response to various employee behaviors can establish expectations moving forward. Whether positive or negative, behaviors that are reinforced within a specific organizational climate, either through direct promotion or implicit acceptance, will continue to occur.

Influence on Workplace Behaviors

As employees learn what is acceptable behavior, not only in achieving organizational outcomes but also by interacting with others, future behavior will extend from those early experiences. Kuenzi et al. (2020) posited that organizations have a responsibility to educate employees about the nature in which work is completed, providing information about expected outcomes and acceptable means for meeting goals. Organizations that promote prosocial values and contribute to community needs can foster similar ethics in their employees, which can influence their workplace actions (Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2016). Victor and Cullen (1988) likewise suggested that an ethical climate can serve as a foundation to help employees consider various positions when faced with an ethically challenging situation to determine the appropriate response. By creating an ethical climate, leaders inform employees what the organization's values are. Alternatively, when leaders tolerate certain behaviors, they could instead create a climate that fosters misconduct.

Organizational climate can negatively influence behavior and contribute to employees engaging in acts that harm the organization or others. Morrison and Milliken (2000) proposed that leaders who perceive that "unity, agreement, and consensus are signs of organizational health" (p. 710) can create environments that limit communication

and lead employees to assess situations from the diverse experiences of others rather than a clearly communicated organizational standard. Pagliaro et al. (2018) found that climates based more on self-interest and individualism decreased employees' attachment to the organization and increased the likelihood that employees would engage in counterproductive behavior. Similarly, Borry (2017) found that employees were more likely to engage in unethical organizational behavior when they worked for organizations that promoted goal achievement and organizational success at any cost. With greater tolerance of unethical behavior, it can be more difficult for employees to challenge those existing norms, creating a sense of complacency as they accept the circumstances and find a way to work within that environment.

Influence on Job Attitudes

The environment in which employees work can also influence employee perceptions towards the job and the organization overall. Jiang and Yao (2020) found that employees working in organizations that fostered positive and communicative environments were more willing to express opinions, leading to greater organizational identification and lower turnover intentions. The nature of the organizational climate and the extent to which employees identify with the values espoused in that climate can also influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Liu & Lin, 2016; Newman et al., 2017). However, prolonged exposure in an environment that tolerates behaviors contrary to the employee's personal beliefs can decrease employee morale (Jeon & Kukla-Acevedo, 2019). The options that employees perceive are available to them for conducting daily work and how to respond to the ethically questionable actions of others

can then directly impact how the employee engages in that work setting. Though employees may espouse a personal set of ethics, the toll of working in an ethically questionable environment can create a sense of complacency as they accept the circumstances and find a way to work within that setting.

Influence on Employee Silence

Given the damaging effects of unethical organizational behavior, it is in the organization's best interest to learn about misconduct when it happens. By providing sufficient reporting channels and appropriately addressing identified issues, leaders can create an environment where employees feel comfortable reporting unethical organizational behavior (Johansson & Carey, 2016; Scheetz & Fogarty, 2019). Near and Miceli (1985) likewise posited that the extent to which reporting unethical behavior would create necessary changes is a significant predictor of whether or not employees will actually do so. However, some organizational climates can impede reporting as employees fear what would happen if they speak up, leading to an environment permeated by silence (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). If employees perceive that the consequences for reporting may be greater than any potential benefits, they may decide to remain silent to protect themselves and their available resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Monzani et al., 2016). Because reporting unethical behavior may be an unpopular decision, there needs to be sufficient motivation that any risks the employee may assume are justified. To further complicate whether or not to remain silent, employees must consider various environmental factors related to reporting misconduct.

When examining how others may respond to reporting unethical organizational behavior, employees must first consider the context of the behaviors. Because of the influence the social environment can have on behavior (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), climates that prevent or inhibit reporting misconduct can instill an expectation to focus on the job at hand and remain silent. Furthermore, in some organizations, unethical behavior is so embedded into the climate that there is a noticeable lack of opportunities to raise concerns (van Rooij & Fine, 2018). Kaptein (2020) found a negative relationship between the frequency of observed unethical behaviors and a willingness to report misconduct. Such results suggest an acceptance of misconduct that could influence the reporting decision as employees consider how others may respond to the disclosure.

One factor that can influence employees' decisions to remain silent is their perceptions of possible outcomes from reporting misconduct. When prior reports are minimized or ignored, employees may be less likely to report future unethical behavior, having learned that there is no point in challenging the status quo (Adamska & Jurek, 2017; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019b; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Harlos and Knoll (2018) explained how silence begets silence, noting that as certain issues remain unaddressed, it can be even more difficult to report other concerns at a later time. Climates that evolve from the preferences of a select group can further lead employees to question whether their report would be taken seriously as those in the dominant group may try to undermine the legitimacy of the employee's claim (Fernando & Prasad, 2019; Jung & Yoon, 2019). Upon recognizing that reporting will accomplish little within the current work environment, employees may resign themselves to the fact that it is simply not

worth the time or effort to report misconduct. Likewise, employees may also consider what negative consequences could result if they were to blow the whistle.

As part of the reporting decision process, employees may also consider what could happen to them directly. Employees who accept the current work environment may remain silent because they fear losing their position or status (Gan, 2020; Mirzapour & Baoosh, 2018; Nawawi & Salin, 2019). Alternatively, employees may fear retaliation from others, particularly if reporting goes against group norms (Credo et al., 2016; Kiewitz et al., 2016; Latan et al., 2021; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Regardless of the motivation, fear is a powerful factor in the decision-making process that can make an already challenging decision even more difficult. However, employees are not mindless drones solely influenced by their surroundings. The extent to which they are committed to the organization may also factor into the decision of whether to blow the whistle or remain silent.

Organizational Commitment

Just as there are myriad reasons why individuals might accept a position within an organization, there are various factors that may compel them to stay. Meyer and Allen (1991) indicated that organizational commitment “(a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization” (p. 67). The authors further stated that organizational commitment could be grouped into three main types based on whether employees want, need, or are obligated to remain with the organization. Affective commitment reflects an emotional connection to the organization and the ability to see

one's sense of purpose within the organization (Meyer et al., 1998). Meyer et al. described continuance commitment as the employee's need to remain with the organization based on what may be lost if the employee left, while normative commitment reflects an obligation to stay out of a sense of duty. While employees may remain with an organization for different reasons, constant through the various types of commitment are employees' reactions towards and perceptions of their environment. Circumstances that may influence that environment could further impact the employee's level of commitment towards the organization.

Previous researchers have examined various factors that may influence organizational commitment. Kanat-Maymon et al. (2018) found increased levels of organizational commitment among employees who had supportive and motivational supervisors. Cotton et al. (2017) similarly found a positive relationship between leaders who promoted and enacted ethical values and the organizational commitment of their employees. Other organizational factors such as procedural justice and retention efforts (Exmeyer, 2020), and opportunities to voice opinions or express concerns (Astvik et al., 2021; Dedahanov & Rhee, 2015), can also influence organizational commitment. Vakola and Bouradas (2005) proposed that employees enter organizations with a specific set of needs, and the extent to which the organization can meet those needs will impact how committed employees are to the organization. This suggests a more complex relationship in which organizational commitment results from a combination of factors since no one factor could meet every need. Thus, it is also necessary to consider the organizational climate in which these factors come together.

Schneider (1975) explained that organizational climate reflects the shared “perceptions people have of their work settings” (p.473), which in turn can influence employee attitudes and behaviors. For example, Miao et al. (2021) found that organizations that demand a high level of performance from employees can positively influence organizational commitment as employees clearly understand organizational expectations and know they will be supported in meeting specified goals. Other researchers have suggested that organizational commitment extends from an ethical organizational climate as employees are treated with caring and respect (Aryati et al., 2018; Taylor & Curtis, 2018; Tremblay et al., 2019). However, organizational climate can negatively impact organizational commitment. Hozouri et al. (2018) found that organizational commitment decreased in climates of silence and mistrust as employees did not feel valued, and that their ideas would be disregarded. These findings support Vakola and Bouradas’ (2005) assertion that organizational commitment results when employees’ needs are met and illustrate the role of the overall work environment in creating the setting to meet those needs. While organizational factors influence organizational commitment, this commitment can also impact how employees respond to various organizational situations.

When employees notice unethical organizational behavior, the level of organizational commitment could influence their decision to report the misconduct. Cintya and Yustina (2019) found that employees higher in affective commitment and organizational identification were more willing to whistleblow internally to maintain the organization’s reputation. Employees may be motivated by more personal factors, as

Verschuuren (2020) posited that employees high in organizational commitment and organizational identification may be more likely to report unethical organizational behavior to protect their identity within the organization. When employees feel valued, they may demonstrate their commitment to the organization by reporting misconduct, trusting that appropriate action will be taken to address the concern (Brink et al., 2018; Kanojia et al., 2020). By reporting unethical organizational behavior, employees are actively contributing to the improvement and development of their organization. However, the relationship between organizational commitment and reporting misconduct is more complex as other factors could influence the decision.

Despite being committed to the organization and its success, some employees may decide to remain silent when confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others. Competing commitments, such as to the employee's workgroup or workplace relationships, can negatively influence their whistleblowing decisions and make them less likely to report to protect their work environment (Doe et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018; Wombacher & Felfe, 2017; Zhan, 2020). Silence can also result when group norms (Lavena, 2016) and organizational politics (Qian et al., 2021) dictate expected behavior and indicate possible consequences should an employee report misconduct. Over time, as employees come to accept current behavioral expectations, they may continue to remain silent, believing that little would change even if they were to make a report (Morrow et al., 2016). In such environments, employees may show their commitment to the organization by adhering to current expectations and maintaining the status quo. While organizational commitment can have diverse and direct influences on behavior, it is

further unclear how organizational commitment may mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Employee Silence

Pinder and Harlos (2001) defined employee silence as the intentional withholding of information from those within the organization who would be in a position to address the issue. Silence can be considered an active response aimed at self-protection or a passive resignation to an uncommunicative environment (Harlos & Knoll, 2018; Van Dyne et al., 2003). Employees may also use silence to maintain positive relationships or protect the work environment employees created for themselves (Chou & Chang, 2020; Knoll & Redman, 2016; Nechanska et al., 2020). Employee silence can serve multiple purposes that create short-term benefits for the employee or organization but potentially lead to long-range consequences. Understanding factors that may contribute to employee silence can provide context into the decision process.

Antecedents of Employee Silence

There are various reasons why employees may choose to remain silent when confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others. Chou and Chang (2020) suggested that factors relating to employee silence can be considered at organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels. The authors explained that organizational factors reflect organizational policies or climates that impact the general environment. While not entirely unrelated, Chou and Chang distinguished interpersonal factors as those that relate not only to the relationships with other employees but the influence of leadership as well. Finally, the authors described individual factors as those attributes and perceptions

unique to the employee. In many situations, it is no one factor that leads to silence, but the interaction of factors from various levels (e.g., Donovan et al., 2016; Lam & Xu, 2019; Monzani et al., 2016; Park et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020).

Organizational Factors. At the most basic level, in order for employees to report misconduct, they need opportunities to do so. Employees are more likely to remain silent when there are no clear channels for communicating with organizational leaders (Dedahanov et al., 2016; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). However, providing communication opportunities will be of little benefit if employees believe nothing will change if they report misconduct. In separate studies in which employees from diverse fields explained why they remained silent, Donovan et al. (2016), Gan (2020), and Robinson and Shuck (2019) found that key reasons employees remained silent was the belief that doing so would have no impact or that the information they shared would be dismissed. Other researchers support these findings, noting that when organizational representatives failed to address prior reports effectively, employees were less likely to report future issues (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019b; MacMahon et al., 2018). Over time, employees may perceive that reporting misconduct is simply not worth their effort to raise concerns. While a failure to respond may be limited to select leaders, this also hints at the influence of organizational climate on an employee's decision to report or remain silent.

In some organizations, the overall climate of the work environment promotes silence. Morrison and Milliken (2000) described a "climate of silence" (p. 708) as one in which employees throughout the organization deal with issues by remaining silent in the belief that nothing will change or out of fear of what may happen if they do speak up. In

such environments, employees need to determine their ethical responsibility to speak up and whether it is even possible to do so (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Additionally, organizational climate reflects the group norms that identify acceptable behavior and what possible outcomes if an employee were to act contrary to expectations (Borman & Rowold, 2016). Employees must then consider the potential for losing their job if they were to speak up, which can further contribute to employee silence (Anderson, 2018; Breevaart et al., 2020; Mirzapour & Baoosh, 2018; Pirie, 2016). Despite personal perceptions, the unethical behavior of others does not occur in a vacuum, and employees must weigh the costs and benefits of reporting given the specific organizational environment. This decision process is no less complicated when considering employees' relationships with others within the organization.

Interpersonal Factors. At the interpersonal level, employees determine whether to voice their concerns or remain silent in response to how their actions may be received by or impact others. Various authors have found the detrimental impact of abusive supervision on employee silence, with many employees remaining silent as a coping mechanism (e.g., Lam & Xu, 2019; Park et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020). The leader-employee relationship need not be this extreme to influence the decision to remain silent. Trust and supervisor support are critical factors in helping employees feel comfortable raising concerns (Hassan et al., 2019; Karakas, 2019; Lebel, 2016). When the leader displays traits or actions that erodes said trust, employees are more likely to remain silent out of fear of how the leader may respond (Dedahanov & Rhee, 2015; Monzani et al., 2016; Song et al., 2017). How the employee perceives the leader's

response is an important element but is not the only factor in calculating whether to report unethical organizational behavior or remain silent. Employees also consider the impact on and response from coworkers that could result if they reported misconduct.

In some instances, the decision to remain silent results because of the friendships employees have with other coworkers and feel the need to protect them, particularly when employees fear negative consequences could result from the disclosure (Donovan et al., 2016). Alternatively, it could be the fear of what the coworkers may do in retaliation that drives employees to maintain silence (MacMahon et al., 2018). The fear of how they may be treated if they were to speak up is particularly acute when employees already feel left out, leading employees to remain silent to avoid acting against the larger group (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018; Kirrane et al., 2017) Whether out of loyalty or fear, employees may remain silent with the knowledge that they will need to continue to working with their coworkers. Maintaining the status quo is how they deal with or maintain those relationships. Despite the social nature of the work environment, it is ultimately a personal decision to report misconduct or remain silent and individual factors can also influence this reporting decision.

Individual Factors. Individual attributes can also impact employees' decisions to remain silent when confronted with an ethical dilemma. Employees who consistently face negative work environments may experience increased stress and then use silence as a means for handling that stress (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). For other employees, silence results from the extent to which employees identify with the organization and their desire to maintain current organizational processes that contribute to their personal outcomes

(Monzani et al., 2016; Nechanska et al., 2020). Anderson (2018) and Gan (2020) posited that silence may result from the employee's dependency on the organization for their livelihood, leading them to take action to ensure their continued employment. Thus, employee silence can be a protective mechanism to deal with a difficult work setting or an effective tool for maintaining the status quo. The combination of organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors contributing to employee silence can further inform on various types of silence employees may use.

Types of Silence

While employees may not consciously think about the reasons for remaining silent in the moment, considering the circumstances can explain why they chose to stay quiet. Van Dyne et al. (2003) posited that employee silence is not a single idea but a multifaceted construct centered on the employee's reason for being silent. The authors further explained how silence can be a passive response to protect oneself or a proactive act designed to further one's own or others' interests. How employees perceive the situation informs what actions they may take, with organizational attributes such as available communication channels or how the report may be received, further influencing their decisions (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Employees need to consider the impact of any specific course of action and how that decision may affect them and their working environment. While there are varying explanations of employee silence types (refer to Rai & Agarwal, 2018), this study will focus on the forms Knoll and van Dick (2013) used when creating their employee silence survey, which include acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial silence.

Acquiescent Silence. Knoll and van Dick (2013) indicated that acquiescent silence results when the organizational climate is characterized by a general unwillingness to listen to new ideas and a desire to maintain the status quo. In such environments, silence is more of a passive acceptance that speaking up will not bring about any meaningful changes (Adamska & Jurek, 2017). Harlos and Knoll (2018) suggested that acquiescent silence reflects a recognition of an established work environment as employees see no point in raising issues, believing that leaders will not act on any reports. Whether employees have given up or just managed to find a way to exist in a non-responsive work environment, acquiescent silence can further the cycle of silence within an organization as employees no longer have the desire to speak up when opportunities present themselves to do so. While some organizational climates create a sense of hopelessness, others lead employees to question what will happen if they raise concerns.

Quiescent Silence. Unlike acquiescent silence, which extends from a sense of resignation, quiescent silence is characterized as an active response driven by fear (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). Some researchers have found that abusive or unethical leaders can instill a sense of fear in employees, leading employees to remain silent to minimize any potential negative impact with their leader (e.g., Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019a; Mannan & Kashif, 2020). Donovan et al. (2016) found that one of the main reasons employees choose to remain silent is fear of consequences for themselves and their coworkers. When confronted with a challenging situation, employees may use quiescent silence to protect themselves or others. In this way, employees use silence to maintain some control when

faced with scenarios of unknown outcomes. However, some employees may use silence to manipulate the work environment and promote their own goals.

Opportunistic Silence. Knoll and van Dick (2013) explained that employees use opportunistic silence to actively withhold information to further their personal agendas. In such circumstances, silence is less of a reaction and more of a tool in the employee's arsenal to craft the work environment in the employee's favor. Such silence can then drive employee behavior, such that they focus on work that benefits themselves rather than the organization overall (Chou & Chang, 2021). Alternatively, some employees may intentionally withhold information due to a strong organizational attachment and believe that keeping the organization as it is will help maintain their current standing (Nechanska et al., 2020). If employees perceive that the unethical behaviors of others personally benefit them in some way, they may actively choose to remain silent to enable their continued occurrence. While opportunistic silence is a very self-centered form of silence, others may remain silent to benefit others.

Prosocial Silence. Prosocial silence is a unique type of silence in which employees remain silent in the belief that they are helping others (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Rather than staying silent for personal reasons, employees use silence to positively contribute to workplace relationships (Bormann & Rowold, 2016). In separate studies involving surveys administered to multinational employees in various fields, Hawass (2016) and Kirrane et al. (2017) found that employees used prosocial silence to improve or maintain workplace relationships. Despite the more positive motivation associated with prosocial silence, employees could implicitly condone unethical organizational

behavior when used to protect a coworker. Whether done for personal gain, protecting oneself or others, or resigned acceptance, remaining silent can have far-reaching effects on the organization.

Consequences of Silence

While remaining silent can be a way for employees to maintain some kind of control in their work environment, such actions can also have negative impacts. Silence can lead to employee stress (Dedahanov et al., 2016), depression or anxiety (Mannan & Kashif, 2020), and an overall decline in personal health (Knoll et al., 2019). Employee silence can also negatively impact attitudes towards work, as Vakola and Bouradas (2005) found lower levels of organizational commitment, and Jiang and Yao (2020) found an increase in turnover intentions among employees who felt they could not speak up at work. Organizations can also be negatively impacted by employee silence through a decrease in the communication of critical issues (De los Santos et al., 2020) and the propagation of counterproductive workplace behaviors (Jung & Yoon, 2019). What may seem to be a short-term coping strategy can easily turn into the default response with long-term consequences when employees are confronted with challenging work scenarios or ethical dilemmas. While prior research has explored various factors contributing to employee silence, it is unclear how organizational commitment may mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence.

Summary and Conclusions

Employee misconduct can negatively impact organizations. Financial losses and reputational damage can make it difficult for organizations to recover from unethical

behavior (Patra, 2016). If left unaddressed, deviant behavior can permeate an organization, such that unethical behavior is not only tolerated but actively condoned, making it even more difficult for an employee to speak against such behaviors (van Rooij & Fine, 2018). Creating opportunities for employees to report misconduct can promote safe working environments and allow leaders to address issues before they bring serious harm to others or the organization (Exmeyer, 2020; Jeon, 2017; Latan et al., 2021). However, while reporting misconduct could benefit the organization, and by extension, employees, some employees are hesitant to report the unethical organizational behavior of others. Chou and Chang (2020) suggested that organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors can influence the decision of whether to blow the whistle or remain silent. What is unclear in the literature is how factors at various levels may interact during the decision process when employees are contemplating whether to report misconduct.

One organizational factor that can influence employee silence is organizational climate. Climates that accept unethical behavior as part of standard business practices can create barriers that lead employees to remain silent, believing that nothing would change or fearing what may happen or if they were to make a report (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019b, Gan, 2020; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). However, employee behaviors are not solely driven by the influences of others, and at a more individual level, how committed employees are to the organization can also influence the reporting decision. Some research suggests that organizational commitment may encourage reporting as employees seek to protect the reputation and integrity of the organization (Cintya & Yustina, 2019; Verschuuren, 2020). However, some employees committed to the organization may

remain silent to protect their current work environment (Doe et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018). What remains unclear is how organizational climate and organizational commitment may interact in the decision to remain silent when confronted with unethical organizational behavior.

The gap in the literature this study addressed is that it was unknown how organizational commitment may mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. In the next chapter, I will describe the quantitative data collection procedures that were used to examine the nature of the relationship among organizational climate, organizational commitment, and employee silence. There will also be a description of the population and what steps were taken to ensure the ethical protection of participants. Finally, I will describe the surveys used in this study, threats to validity and how they were addressed, and the analyses for the data. The results from this study can add to the body of knowledge by providing insight into how organizational climate and organizational commitment may interact in their influence on employee silence.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. In this chapter, I will explain why a quantitative design was used for this study. The details associated with data collection will also be described, including participant inclusion criteria, recruitment, and how the surveys were administered. Three surveys were used for this study. The first was the caring subscale of the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988), followed by the affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization subscales of the Organizational Commitment Scales (Meyer et al., 1993), and finally, participants completed the Employee Silence Survey (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). The following sections will describe specific details associated with the surveys and why they were selected for this study.

I will also describe the data analysis methods I expected to use to test the hypotheses for the study. Potential issues associated with internal, external, and construct validity will also be discussed. Finally, the chapter will acknowledge potential ethical concerns associated with data collection and steps taken to minimize the risks of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

The focus of the study was to examine how organizational climate and organizational commitment may influence employee silence. The predictor variable was organizational climate, and the mediating variable was organizational commitment. The criterion variables were four forms of employee silence identified by Knoll and van Dick

(2013): acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial silence. This quantitative, correlational study used a cross-sectional survey to investigate whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and four forms of employee silence. Surveys are an effective method to gather quantitative data to assess the relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative approaches using cross-sectional surveys have been used in prior studies involving mediation analyses (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019a; Mignonac et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020). Collecting quantitative data will contribute new knowledge to the field by providing information about how factors may interact to influence employee silence.

Surveys for this study were administered online. Babbie (2017) indicated that online surveys can efficiently collect data from a widespread population. While participants needed access to the internet, they were not limited in how or when they completed the survey. The survey was compatible with both computers and mobile devices, allowing participants to complete the survey on their preferred device. Because participants could access the survey at any time, they could complete the survey when convenient. The survey remained open until the necessary sample size was obtained.

Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. I used a quantitative design to examine the nature of the relationship among variables (Babbie, 2017). As there was no manipulation of variables, this was a correlational study with no attempt to establish any type of causation (Warner, 2013).

Using a quantitative design is consistent with prior research that has described potential mediating factors related to employee silence (see Chou & Chang, 2021; Mignonac et al., 2018; Qian et al., 2021).

Data were collected through internet surveys. Conducting internet surveys can be an efficient method for collecting data from a diverse population in a relatively short amount of time (Babbie, 2017; Lehdonvirta et al., 2020). Prior research has been conducted using web-based surveys (see Haller et al., 2018; Kong, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2018; Scheetz & Wilson, 2019), setting a precedence for the appropriateness of this approach. Using internet surveys allowed for data to be collected anonymously and provided an extra layer of protection for maintaining the privacy of the data.

Population

Surveys were administered to adults who were at least 18 years of age, witnessed or had credible knowledge of unethical organizational behavior of others, and chose to remain silent rather than report the offense. Participants were recruited from the general population, and individuals from any industry or role in the organization could participate. Respondents also did not need to be currently employed with the organization where the offense occurred, as leaving the organization can be a response when confronted with unethical behavior (Monzani et al., 2016). One additional parameter is that the study was limited to individuals who had access to the internet, as recruitment was only done online.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

I used non-probabilistic, convenience sampling by recruiting through Centiment, an online survey panel, and posting an invitation on social media. A weakness of this sampling method is the potential for the sample to lack representativeness of the larger population (Babbie, 2017). However, Lehdonvirta et al. (2020) posited that online panels and social media can be a cost-effective method for reaching smaller subgroups within a larger population. As this study was focused only on adult employees who were aware of organizational misconduct but remained silent, relying on methods that reached individuals in diverse fields and locations assisted in making the study known to a broader group of potential participants.

The sample was drawn from individuals who have access to social media or had signed up to be a member of the online survey panel Centiment. An invitation was used that identified the exact inclusion criteria for participation. Specifically, participants must have witnessed or had credible knowledge of employee misconduct and chose to remain silent. The study was limited to individuals who were at least 18 years of age. The desired sample size for this study was 138 responses. This was calculated using the G*Power statistical power analysis program, assuming a medium effect size and including five predictor variables (Faul et al., 2007). The calculation was also based on an alpha level of .05 and a power level of .95, as Warner (2013) suggested.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

There were two methods of recruitment for this study. First, I posted a flyer on my personal Linked In webpage that included a link to the online survey. Second, I

recruited through Centiment, a paid online survey panel. Recruiting through an internet panel can be an effective method to obtain diversity within a sample (Groves et al., 2009). There was no direct contact with potential participants to minimize any potential pressure to participate. If individuals chose to complete the survey, they could click on a link included with the invitation.

The first page of the online survey was the consent form. No signatures were collected on the consent form to protect the identity of participants. Implied consent was used, such that completion of the survey indicated their consent if they chose to participate. The first questions of the survey collected respondents' gender, age, industry, and tenure with the organization where the misconduct occurred. Collection of these demographic characteristics is consistent with prior research and was used solely to describe the sample (see Kanat-Maymon et al., 2018; Kirrane et al., 2017; Wombacher & Felfe, 2017; Xu et al., 2020). Participants then completed the caring subscale of the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988), Organizational Commitment Scales (Meyer et al., 1993), and Employee Silence Survey (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). All surveys were completed online. Participants only completed the survey once, and when they completed the survey could close their browser to exit the study. There were no follow-up communications with participants.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The predictor variable of organizational climate was measured using the 7-item caring subscale of the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988). The mediating variable, organizational commitment, was measured using the affective,

continuance, and normative commitment to the organization subscales of the Organizational Commitment Scales (Meyer et al., 1993). The criterion variable of employee silence was measured using the Employee Silence Survey developed by Knoll and van Dick (2013). All surveys were completed online using Centiment, an online survey host site.

Ethical Climate Questionnaire

Victor and Cullen (1988) developed the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) to assess “organizational decision-making norms with *direct* links to supporting forms of ethical reasoning” (p. 110). The authors further explained that the ECQ was not designed to pass judgment on employee behaviors or organizational policies but solely to assess the type of climate the employee perceives. While the ECQ consists of five total subscales, participants were only presented with the caring subscale. This subscale contains questions that can concisely address climate issues related to interpersonal relationships and organizational expectations. This is also consistent with prior research pertaining to unethical organizational behavior and employee silence in which only the caring subscale was used to assess organizational climate (Kuenzi et al., 2020; Taylor & Curtis, 2018; Zhang & Yao, 2019).

Victor and Cullen (1988) developed the ECQ using employees from four organizations purposively chosen to represent diverse organizational sizes and industries. The authors did not specifically address steps to assess validity. Still, by comparing results across the organizations, they found that the ECQ could discriminate different organizational climate types across organizations. Victor and Cullen further found that

the ECQ could distinguish distinct climates within an organization based on various characteristics such as job level or office location (home versus branch office). The ECQ has been used in subsequent studies when measuring organizational climate in diverse fields and geographic cultures (see Aryati et al., 2018; Aydan & Kaya, 2018; Borry, 2017; Ning & Zhaoyi, 2017), providing support for the appropriateness of this instrument for this study. Victor and Cullen calculated the reliability of the caring subscale of the ECQ to be $\alpha = .80$, which is considered to be sufficiently high.

The ECQ was retrieved from PsycTESTS and can be used for research purposes without further permission. Appendix A describes the terms for use. The items are scored using a 6-point Likert scale, with 0 = *completely false* to 5 = *completely true*. A sample question from the ECQ is “The most efficient way is always the right way in this company” (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 112). Completing the seven items of the caring subscale from the ECQ should not have taken participants more than 5 minutes.

Organizational Commitment Scales

The Organizational Commitment Scales (OCS) were developed by Meyer et al. (1993) to assess employees’ affective, continuance, and normative commitment to both the profession and the organization. Consistent with prior research focused on organizational commitment, only subscales specific to organizational commitment were used (i.e., Kanat-Maymon et al., 2018; Miao et al., 2021; Sungu et al., 2019). Each of the three commitment to the organization subscales consists of six questions, and it should have taken no more than 5 minutes for participants to answer all 18 questions. The items are scored using a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Some of the questions are negatively worded and were reverse scored at the time of data analysis. Sample questions from the OCS include “The organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me” (affective), “I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization” (continuance), and “I would feel guilty if I left my organization now” (normative) (Meyer et al., 1993, p. 544). The OCS was retrieved from PsycTESTS and can be used for research purposes without further permission, as indicated in Appendix B.

Meyer et al. (1993) calculated reliability and validity statistics for each subscale of the OCS in developing this instrument. The coefficient alphas for each of the subscales was found to be sufficiently high (affective commitment scale = .82; continuance commitment scale = .74; normative commitment scale = .83). Meyer et al. compared their results to other surveys measuring organizational constructs such as intention to leave, job satisfaction, loyalty, voice, and voluntary absence to assess construct validity. The authors found that the commitment to the organization scales were significantly correlated with other constructs, suggesting that organizational commitment is related to organizational behaviors and perceptions.

While the OCS was initially used with nursing students (Meyer et al., 1993), the scale has since been used with other populations. In their review of studies that had used the OCS with samples in diverse fields and organizations, Allen and Meyer (1996) found similar results. They noted a median reliability of .85 for affective commitment, .79 for continuance commitment, and .73 for normative commitment. When compared to affective organizational attitudes, such as job satisfaction or involvement, Allen and

Meyer found strong correlations with affective commitment, moderate correlations with normative commitment, and minimal correlations with continuance commitment, supporting the discriminant validity of these subscales. The OCS has also been used with various international populations (Haller et al., 2018; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Sungu et al., 2019), suggesting that the survey can be used with individuals from diverse areas and backgrounds.

Employee Silence Survey

Knoll and van Dick (2013) developed the Employee Silence Survey (ESS), which consists of four subscales that measure acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial employee silence. The overall survey consists of 12 questions, with three questions for each subscale. It should have taken participants no more than 5 minutes to respond to the questions in this survey. The items are scored using a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = *does apply to me not at all* and 7 = *does apply to me entirely*. All questions begin with the same item root of “I remained silent at work” with sample questions including “because nothing will change anyway” (acquiescent), “because of fear of negative consequences” (quiescent), “because that would mean having to do avoidable work” (opportunistic), and “because I do not want to embarrass others” (prosocial; Knoll & van Dick, 2013, p. 355). Permission to use the ESS was obtained from the lead author via email and is included in Appendix C.

In developing the ESS, Knoll and van Dick (2013) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm that each type of silence was distinct from one another. Factor loadings confirmed the distinct nature of each subscale. Knoll and van Dick assessed

construct validity by correlating the four types of employee silence with other organizational constructs, including organizational climate of silence, job satisfaction, organizational identification, strain, turnover intention, and well-being. The authors found that each of the four forms of employee silence had negative correlations with job satisfaction and well-being and positive correlations with turnover intention. The reliability coefficients for each subscale were also computed, with each subscale having a sufficiently high score (acquiescent = .88, quiescent = .89, opportunistic = .80, prosocial = .82).

The ESS was originally developed using distance learners attending a German higher education institution who were also currently working (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). The authors noted the diversity of the sample, with participants representing various organizational positions, tenure, and sizes. Chou and Chang (2021) used the ESS with respondents from various companies in the United States. They obtained reliability and validity results similar to Knoll and van Dick (2013), providing further support that the instrument is appropriate for use with employees from diverse fields and locations.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this study was to examine whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. I expected to use SEM run through IBM SPSS AMOS Version 28 to conduct the analyses for the following research questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence?

H₀1: Organizational commitment (1a: affective; 1b: continuance; 1c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence.

H_A1: Organizational commitment (1a: affective; 1b: continuance; 1c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence.

Research Question 2: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence?

H₀2: Organizational commitment (2a: affective; 2b: continuance; 2c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence.

H_A2: Organizational commitment (2a: affective; 2b: continuance; 2c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence.

Research Question 3: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence?

H₀3: Organizational commitment (3a: affective; 3b: continuance; 3c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence.

H_{A3}: Organizational commitment (3a: affective; 3b: continuance; 3c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence.

Research Question 4: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence?

H₀₄: Organizational commitment (4a: affective; 4b: continuance; 4c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

H_{A4}: Organizational commitment (4a: affective; 4b: continuance; 4c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

Before conducting the analyses, I screened the data to identify any potential inconsistencies or inaccuracies. The survey was created to require responses to all questions in order to submit. Missing data were not expected, as participants should not have been able to submit a survey unless all questions were answered. Warner (2013) suggested that researchers review the data to look for inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the dataset. It was assumed that participants would respond honestly, though some participants may have rushed through the survey and responded without carefully reviewing the questions. I first checked each respondent's scores to determine whether there were any differences in responses or if participants selected the same response option for each question. The surveys included reverse-worded items, which can effectively identify respondents who are not carefully reading questions (Warner, 2013). I

also included a timer to determine how long it took each respondent to complete the survey. For participants who selected the same response option for each question, I examined the time it took to complete the survey. If it was found that the time needed to complete the survey was unrealistically short, that respondent would have been removed from the overall dataset.

I intend to use SEM to test the hypotheses for this study. Zhao et al. (2010) identified limitations with the mediation model articulated by Baron and Kenny (1986) and posited that it is not necessary for there to be a direct effect between the predictor and criterion variables, only that the indirect effect be significant. Zhao et al. cautioned against rejecting a model simply because there is no significant relationship between the predictor and criterion variables since there could be other factors impacting the relationship. Preacher and Hayes (2008) likewise suggested that SEM is preferred for mediation analyses because of the enhanced flexibility associated with model specifications and estimations. By using a method that focuses more on the mediation effect, I could better determine whether to reject or accept the null hypotheses.

When analyzing the data, results were interpreted by calculating confidence intervals to determine the effect of the mediation. SEM uses bootstrapping to generate confidence intervals with greater power compared to the Sobel test (Zhao et al., 2010). Preacher and Hayes (2008) further explained how bootstrapping provides greater control when accounting for Type I errors. Additionally, the critical values generated through bootstrapping are likely to be more accurate and provide greater confidence in determining the mediated effect (MacKinnon et al., 2012). However, the accuracy of

results interpretation further depends on ensuring assumptions associated with the analysis methods are not violated.

Similar to other regression analyses, mediation assumes that variables are continuous and will be normally distributed (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). I ran frequency statistics to measure skewness and kurtosis to determine whether the data were normally distributed, as Warner (2013) recommended. However, another benefit of using SEM is that it is less sensitive to the assumption of normality being violated since bootstrapping can still effectively test significance (Warner, 2013). Mediation further assumes the relationship among variables will be linear, and this was tested by creating scatter plots to identify the linearity of relationships (Warner, 2013). If the scatter plots indicated a lack of linearity, I would have reviewed the dataset to determine whether any inaccuracies or inconsistencies were missed that might explain how this occurred.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

The sample for this study was drawn only from individuals who had access to the internet, with a large percentage of respondents coming from the online survey panel Centiment. The rationale for recruiting using online methods was to efficiently reach as diverse a sample as possible (Lehdonvirta et al., 2020). The goal was to include respondents from diverse fields who represent various tenures with their organizations. However, individuals who sign up to be part of online survey panels may also be more willing to participate in research (Groves et al., 2009). Because the study involved a sample of convenience, the sample may not be representative of the general working

population. I did not attempt to generalize the results to the entire work population and noted descriptive information related to gender, age, industry, and tenure with the organization to provide context for the results.

Another factor that can influence the study's external validity is what participants consider to be unethical organizational behavior. Deviant organizational behavior can range from minor misconduct with minimal impact to serious offenses that can cause harm to others or the organization (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Situational factors such as organizational norms can influence how employees perceive the ethical appropriateness of various behaviors (Jacobson et al., 2020). To minimize the potential for bias that can result from describing unethical scenarios, respondents were not provided with examples of employee misconduct. As the nature of the unethical behavior was not relevant to the analyses, participants were not asked to disclose what type of unethical behavior they witnessed. Thus, there could be homogeneity regarding the types of behaviors for which respondents remained silent, impacting the generalizability of the results. This will be noted as a limitation during the final analyses, as further research would be needed to explore any potential influence of misconduct type.

Internal Validity

The questions in this survey were not intrusive but were more sensitive in nature. In addition to assessing their commitment to the organization and examining the organizational climate, participants were asked about why they remained silent when confronted with employee misconduct. This can introduce the possibility of social desirability bias as participants respond in ways that make themselves look better rather

than providing honest responses (Groves et al., 2009). Because of the potential for attrition, I did not include any type of social desirability check. Instead, surveys were administered anonymously to encourage honest responses, as participants were informed that no responses could be traced to any specific individual (Ghosh, 2017).

Previous researchers have explored other factors that can influence employee silence, including abusive supervision (Mannan & Kashif, 2020; Park et al., 2018), burnout (Sherf et al., 2021), job satisfaction (Knoll & van Dick, 2013), nature of the wrongdoing (Keil et al., 2018; Kirrane et al., 2017), and trust (Dedahanov et al., 2016; Dong & Chung, 2020). It is possible that these or other factors could also influence the respondents' decision to remain silent, given the particular organizational climate within which they work. This will be another limitation that is acknowledged when describing the results of the study. Furthermore, as this was a correlational study only, the focus of the analyses was to determine the nature of the relationships among the defined variables for this study. There was no attempt to determine causation, and results were presented within the specific context of the study.

Construct Validity

When conducting the analyses, the null hypotheses may be incorrectly rejected or accepted, leading to incorrect assumptions about the relationships among variables. Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2018) explained that the probability of conducting a Type 1 error depends on the alpha level. To minimize the potential for accepting null hypotheses that are true, an alpha level of .05 was used. It is also necessary to protect against a Type II error by appropriately considering the effect size and sample

size, in addition to the alpha level (Warner, 2013). Likewise, Garcia-Perez (2012) described the importance of determining a set sample size for a study to account for Type I and Type II errors and thus minimize the potential for statistical conclusion validity. Therefore, I used a sample size calculator to determine the minimum sample size given a medium effect size, an alpha level of .05, and a power of .95 (Faul et al., 2007). Relying on these previously established guidelines during data analysis aided in the correct interpretations of the results.

Another threat to statistical conclusion validity is conducting analyses using incorrect statistical methods, particularly when various assumptions are violated given the dataset (Garcia-Perez, 2012). While researchers need to ensure assumptions are not violated given the statistical method, Garcia-Perez warned against testing for assumptions since this also can impact Type I and Type II errors. Instead, Garcia-Perez suggested that researchers use statistical methods that are less susceptible to violations of assumptions. Consistent with this suggestion, I intended to use SEM to analyze the data and assess the mediation. SEM is less sensitive to violations of normal distribution (Warner, 2013) and provides greater control against Type I errors (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). SEM has been used in prior research involving mediation analyses (see Jiang & Yao, 2020; Mannan & Kashif, 2020; Qian et al., 2021; Tremblay et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). By relying on established statistical methods, I had greater confidence in accurately describing the relationships among the variables.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained for this study from Walden University. The IRB approval number is 11-02-21-0977215, with an expiration date of November 2, 2022. No further organizational permissions were needed, as I recruited through Centiment, a paid online survey panel, and by posting on my personal Linked In webpage. A link to the online survey was included on the online flyer so that individuals could self-select into the study. Because I recruited through my personal social media page, some participants may have known who I am. However, there was no direct contact with participants to minimize any potential pressure to participate, and I had no way of knowing whether anyone I know completed the survey or not. To further minimize any potential for perceived coercion, I did not offer compensation to participants. Any payment to participants was administered by the online survey panel, according to their terms for membership.

When individuals clicked on the link to access the survey, the first page was the consent form. The consent form described the purpose of the study, explained participation consisted of completing an online survey, stated the inclusion criteria and the number of participants needed, and discussed the benefits of the study to the larger community. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the survey was administered anonymously. No identifiers were collected, and the online survey was created so that no IP addresses were collected. The consent form further explained the anonymous nature of the study and that the data would be stored privately. One potential risk to participants was sharing sensitive information. This risk was described on the consent form, and

participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue their participation at any time. If participants had any questions about the study or their rights, my contact information was stated on the consent form along with the contact information for Walden University's Research Participant Advocate.

Because I used previously validated surveys, the online survey for this study was created to require responses to each question. This can negatively influence individuals' perceptions of the voluntary nature of the study. Thus, I explained on the consent form that only fully completed surveys could be used, and if there were questions they did not want to answer, they could discontinue the survey and close their browser. Data from the surveys were initially stored on a password-protected cloud server. With the completion of the dissertation, the data will be moved to an external hard drive that only I can access and saved for five years from the completion of the study. After five years, I will erase the contents of the hard drive. Survey data were made available to members of my committee or other university personnel as needed. Upon completing my dissertation, I will post the study on ScholarWorks and provided a link to this site on the consent form so that participants can access the results if desired.

Summary

I conducted a quantitative study that involved administering online surveys to examine whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. As described in Chapter 3, the surveys were the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988), Organizational Commitment Scales (Meyer et al., 1993), and the Employee Silence Survey (Knoll & van Dick, 2013).

I also discussed potential threats to validity and steps I took to address these potential threats. The surveys were administered online to individuals who knew of unethical organizational behavior and chose to remain silent. As this is a more sensitive topic, I described what measures were in place to ensure the ethical protection of participants. Finally, I explained that I intended to analyze the data using SEM. In Chapter 4, I will describe the details about the exact data collection process. Furthermore, I will discuss the analysis of the data and present the results of the analyses.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. In this chapter, I will provide information about the sample involved in the study, how data were collected, and the results of the analyses. I had intended to use SEM to conduct the analyses but could not get the model to work. Based on the advice of Walden University's methods experts, I used the mediation analysis process described by Preacher and Hayes (2004), which will be described more in-depth below. Simple mediation analyses were conducted to address the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Question 1: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence?

H₀1: Organizational commitment (1a: affective; 1b: continuance; 1c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence.

H_A1: Organizational commitment (1a: affective; 1b: continuance; 1c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence.

Research Question 2: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence?

H₀2: Organizational commitment (2a: affective; 2b: continuance; 2c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence.

H_A2: Organizational commitment (2a: affective; 2b: continuance; 2c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence.

Research Question 3: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence?

H₀3: Organizational commitment (3a: affective; 3b: continuance; 3c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence.

H_A3: Organizational commitment (3a: affective; 3b: continuance; 3c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence.

Research Question 4: To what extent does organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediate the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence?

H₀4: Organizational commitment (4a: affective; 4b: continuance; 4c: normative) does not mediate the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

H_A4: Organizational commitment (4a: affective; 4b: continuance; 4c: normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

Data Collection

I used the online survey site Centiment to host the survey. To ensure consistency with how surveys are presented on this website, I needed to update my consent form and questionnaire. On the consent form, I modified the statement of consent to ask participants to select “I agree” if they decided to volunteer for the study. Clicking “I agree” would then lead them to the first question of the survey. I also added the option “I do not want to take this survey” at the end of the consent form, which exited individuals from the survey if they chose not to participate. On the questionnaire, I added a screening question that asked participants to confirm they had witnessed organizational misconduct and chose not to report the offense. Clarifying instructions were also added to the survey to inform participants that their responses should reflect their perceptions of the organization where the misconduct occurred. Finally, I added an attention check question mid-way through the survey to further eliminate individuals who provided inappropriate responses. Only participants who selected the appropriate response to this question were included in the final sample. I submitted a request for a change of procedures and received approval from the Walden IRB to modify my documents in this manner. The final version of the consent form is included in Appendix E.

When using the Centiment survey panel, the survey is made available in two phases. In the first phase, after a small subset of responses were received, Centiment shared some initial responses with me to confirm the survey worked as expected. Data collection was paused for one day while I reviewed the initial responses to verify the survey worked as expected. Upon confirming there were no issues with the survey,

Centiment reactivated the survey for their survey panel for the second survey phase. I also posted the IRB approved invitation on my Linked In page, which included a link to the survey hosted on Centiment. The survey was active for a total of 11 days, as that was the time needed to reach my minimum sample size. I achieved a sample size of 142.

Participants were asked to respond to four demographic questions: gender, age, industry, and tenure with the organization where the misconduct occurred. Response options were presented as a range for both age and tenure with the organization. Respondents spanned a wide range of age and tenure with the organization, though few respondents were older than 65. Participants were also presented with specific industry types but had the option to select “other” if their field was not reflected in the response options. Responses indicate that participants represented diverse industries, consistent with prior research identifying that organizational misconduct occurs in various fields (Blenkinsopp et al., 2019; Borry, 2017; Jeon, 2017; Scheetz & Wilson, 2019). Table 1 presents the demographic information of the sample for this study.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Sample

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	71	50.0
	Female	71	50.0
	Non-binary	0	0
Age	18-25	20	14.1
	26-35	32	22.5
	36-45	28	19.7
	46-55	25	17.6
	56-65	25	17.6
	66+	12	8.5

Table 1 (*continued*)

	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Industry	Education	20	14.1
	Financial	12	8.5
	Government	21	14.8
	Healthcare	20	14.1
	Nonprofit	3	2.1
	Retail/Sales	25	17.6
	Other	41	28.9
Tenure with the organization (in years)	0-5	63	44.4
	6-10	42	29.6
	11-20	19	13.4
	21+	18	12.7

Note. *N* = 142.

Study Results

To begin the data analysis process, I prescreened the results to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. I created the survey to require responses to all questions. However, when I accessed the dataset, I identified that one participant had somehow managed to submit a survey in which one question was left blank. Consistent with Warner (2013), I decided to estimate a score value for this survey item. I calculated the average score for the missing item across all respondents to identify a mean score of 4.95 and a median of 5. I decided to estimate the value for this missing response to be 5, as this was further consistent with other responses provided by this respondent.

I also included a timer as part of the survey to document how long it took each participant to complete the survey. Times ranged from just under one minute to nearly 23 minutes, with a mean completion time of 3.94 minutes. I further examined the responses of those who completed the survey rather quickly to determine whether they simply provided the same response for each question. For each respondent, I calculated the

standard deviation to assess the variability of their overall responses (minimum $SD = .036$; maximum $SD = 2.87$; $M = 1.49$). I found that participants with the shortest response time did not have the smallest standard deviations, thus revealing some variability in their responses. Since I could not identify obvious evidence of false data, I decided to retain responses from all 142 respondents.

I planned to analyze the data using SEM. However, I encountered an error in the model that could not be resolved. With the approval of my committee chair, I modified the data analysis to use a mediation method described by Preacher and Hayes (2004). Specifically, I used PROCESS Version 3.4, which was included within SPSS 25. Similar to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation method consists of a series of multiple regressions using the PROCESS add-in to SPSS. PROCESS runs the entire mediation analysis to generate the total, direct, and indirect effects of the predictor and mediating variables on the criterion variable. Another advantage of PROCESS is the use of bootstrapping, which enables researchers to determine an effect size even in a smaller sample size and is less susceptible if the assumption of normality is not fully met (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). It is not necessary for a predictor variable to have a statistically significant direct effect on the criterion variable to test for mediation (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon et al., 2000; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Using PROCESS allows for further examination of the overall model, even if the first criterion of the Baron and Kenny method is not met (Hayes, 2009).

Before running the mediation analysis, I ran correlations between the predictor variable of organizational climate and each subtype of the mediating variable of

organizational commitment (affective, continuance, normative) to confirm any collinearity was minimized. Reliability and descriptive statistics were also calculated for the predictor and mediating variables. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Predictor and Mediating Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Organizational Climate ^a	31.58	7.37	.87			
2. Affective Commitment ^b	25.52	7.74	.43**	.69		
3. Continuance Commitment ^b	29.16	8.68	.37**	--	.85	
4. Normative Commitment ^b	28.83	8.79	.61**	--	--	.81

Note. $N = 142$; ** $p < .01$. Diagonal represents Coefficient Alphas.

^a Ethical Climate Questionnaire consisted of 7 questions using a 6-point Likert scale for a maximum score of 42.

^b Each subscale of the Organizational Commitment Scales consisted of 6 items using a 7-point Likert scale for a maximum score of 42 for each subscale.

As part of the mediation analysis run through PROCESS, the influence of the predictor variable (organizational climate) on the three subtypes of the mediating variable (organizational commitment) was also calculated. Organizational climate was found to be a significant predictor of affective commitment, $F(1, 140) = 31.12$, $R^2 = .182$, $p < .001$, continuance commitment, $F(1, 140) = 21.55$, $R^2 = .133$, $p < .001$, and normative commitment, $F(1, 140) = 84.08$, $R^2 = .375$, $p < .001$. Table 3 presents the regression summary.

Table 3*Regression Summary of Organizational Climate Predicting Organizational Commitment Subtypes*

Mediating Variable							
Subtype	B	SE	t	p	B 95% LL-CI	B 95% UL-CI	
1. Affective Commitment	.448	2.60	4.37	< .001	.289	.607	
2. Continuance Commitment	.430	.093	4.64	< .001	.247	.613	
3. Normative Commitment	.731	.080	9.17	< .001	.573	.888	

Note. $N = 142$

Hypothesis 1

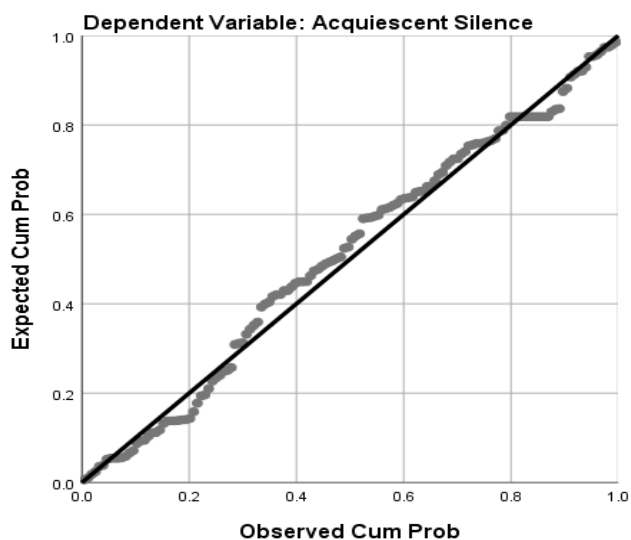
To investigate the extent to which organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and acquiescent silence, three simple mediation analyses were performed using PROCESS. The results for each form of commitment are described separately, with the effect of affective commitment described under Hypothesis 1a, continuance commitment described under Hypothesis 1b, and normative commitment described under Hypothesis 1c.

Hypothesis 1a

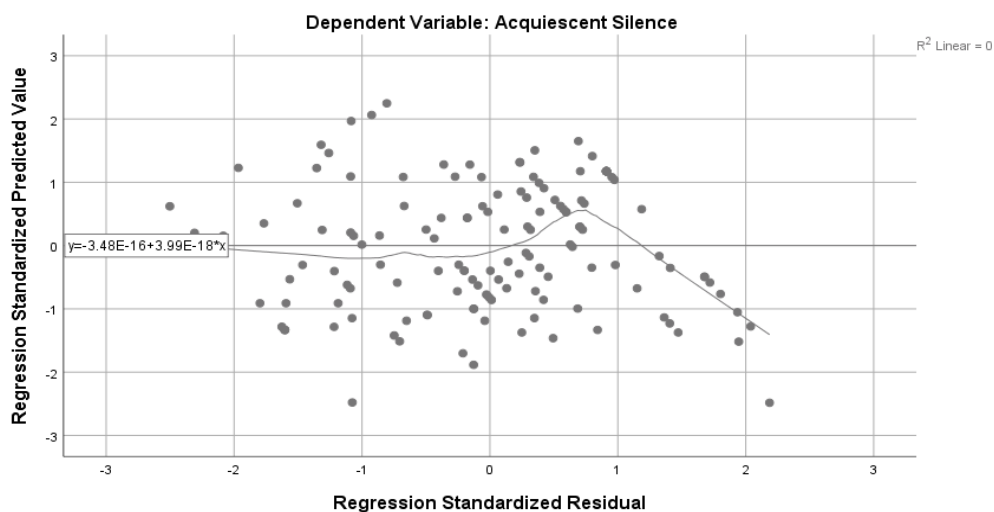
Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 1 and 2). Therefore, these results should be evaluated with caution. However, bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted to combat possible influences of assumption violation.

Figure 1

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective Commitment, Acquiescent Silence

**Figure 2**

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective Commitment, Acquiescent Silence



Organizational climate was not found to be a significant predictor of acquiescent silence, $F(1, 140) = 1.22$, $R^2 = .009$, $p = .271$. However, in the final mediation model,

results indicate that organizational climate influenced affective commitment ($a = .448$) and that employees higher in affective commitment were less likely to engage in acquiescent silence ($b = -.315$). As the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = -.141$) did not include zero [95% C.I. (-.228, -.067)], organizational climate had an indirect influence on acquiescent silence through the effect it had on affective commitment. Figure 3 shows the mediation model, and Table 4 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 1a is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 1a is accepted.

Figure 3

Mediation Model for Hypothesis 1a

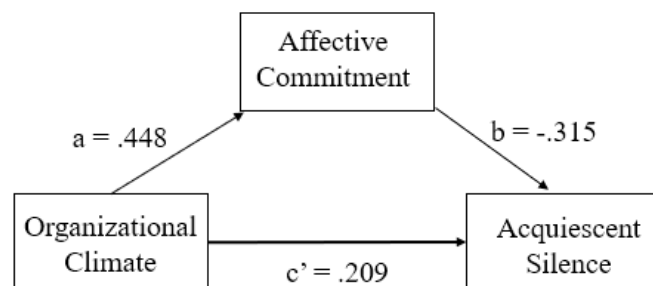


Table 4

Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 1a

Variable	Affective Commitment			Acquiescent Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .448	.080	< .001	<i>c'</i> .209	.062	.001
Affective Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> -.315	.059	< .001

Note. $N = 142$

Hypothesis 1b

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 4 and 5). To combat possible influences of assumption violation, bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted.

Figure 4

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Acquiescent Silence

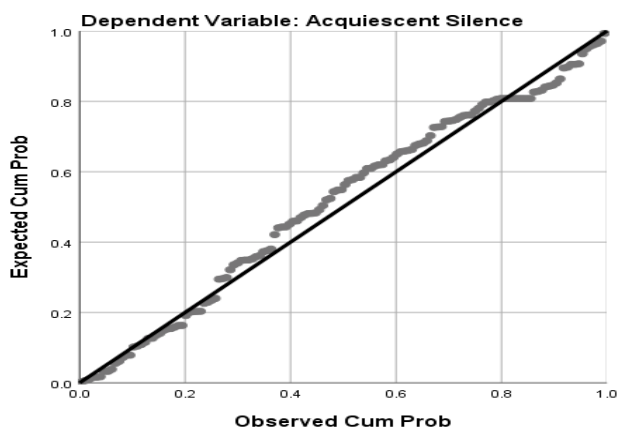
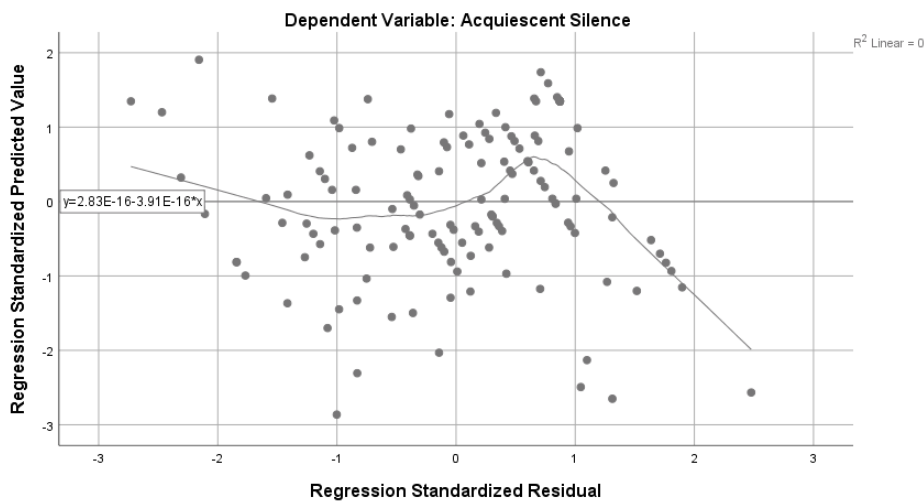


Figure 5

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Acquiescent Silence



Again, while organizational commitment was not found to be a significant predictor of acquiescent silence, in the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced continuance commitment ($a = .430$) and that employees higher in continuance commitment were more likely to engage in acquiescent silence ($b = .246$). It was found that organizational climate had an indirect influence on acquiescent silence via continuance commitment as the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = .106$) did not include zero [95% C.I. .040, .195]. Figure 6 shows the mediation model, and Table 5 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 1b is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 1b is accepted.

Figure 6

Mediation Model for Hypothesis 1b

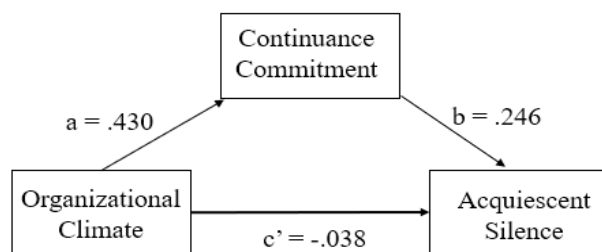


Table 5

Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 1b

Variable	Continuance Commitment			Acquiescent Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .430	.093	< .001	<i>c'</i> -.038	.061	.535
Continuance Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> .246	.052	< .001

Note. $N = 142$

Hypothesis 1c

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 7 and 8). In the final mediation model, a statistically significant indirect effect of organizational climate through normative commitment on acquiescent silence was not found, and Null Hypothesis 1c is accepted.

Figure 7

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Acquiescent Silence

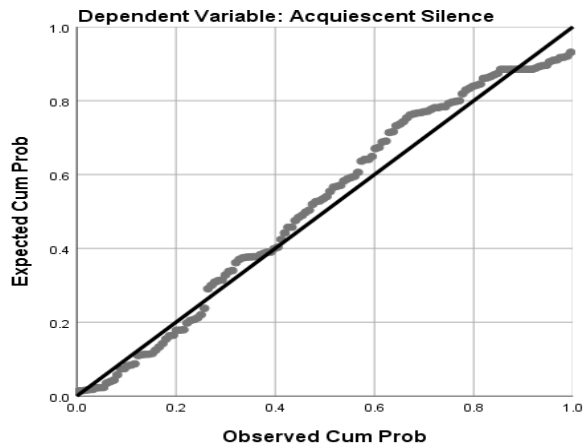
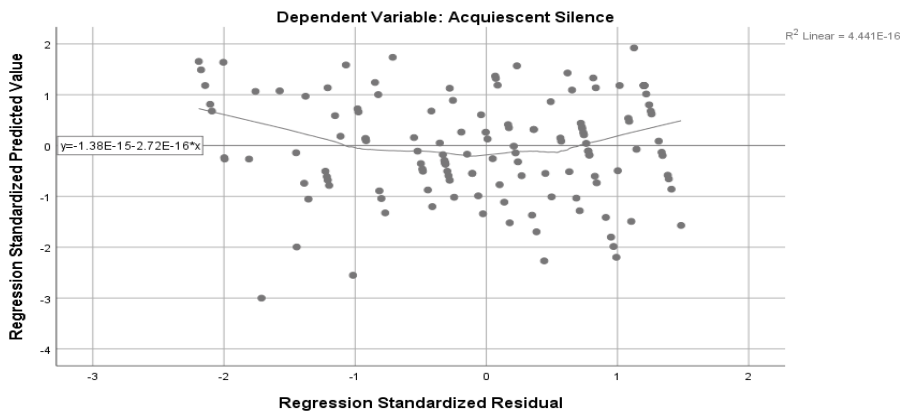


Figure 8

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Acquiescent Silence



Hypothesis 2

To investigate the extent to which organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and quiescent silence, three simple mediation analyses were performed using PROCESS. The results for each form of commitment are described separately, with the effect of affective commitment described under Hypothesis 2a, continuance commitment described under Hypothesis 2b, and normative commitment described under Hypothesis 2c.

Hypothesis 2a

As was done for Hypothesis 1, I conducted preliminary analyses to assess the assumptions for Hypothesis 2a, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 9 and 10). Bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted to protect against possible influences of assumption violation.

Figure 9

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective, Commitment, Quiescent Silence

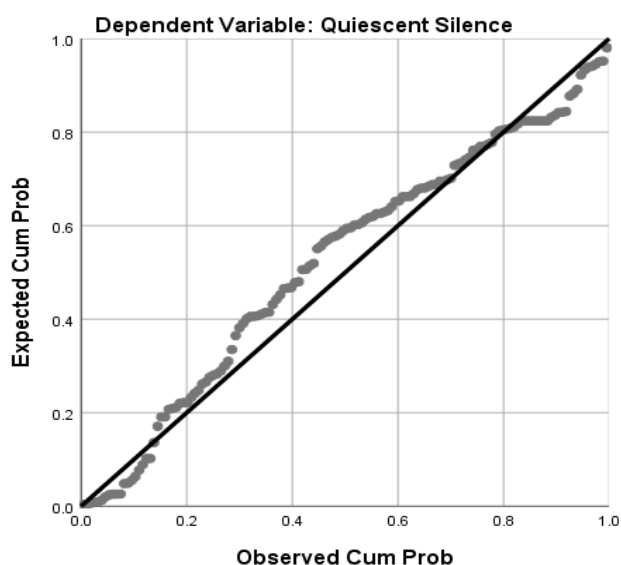
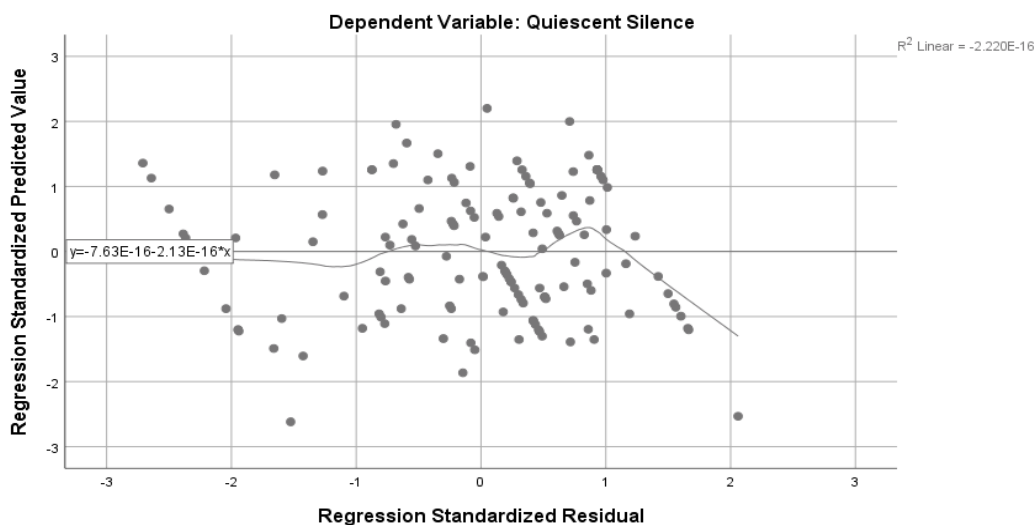
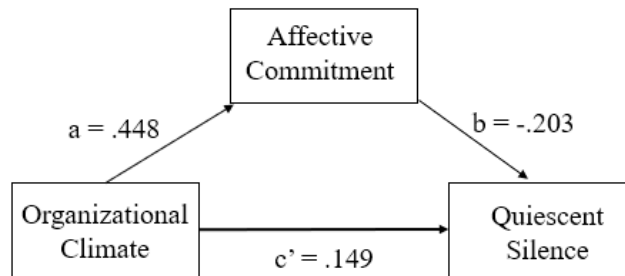


Figure 10

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective, Commitment, Quiescent Silence



Organizational climate was not found to be a significant predictor of quiescent silence, $F(1, 140) = .984$, $R^2 = .007$, $p = .323$. However, in the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced affective commitment ($a = .448$) and that employees higher in affective commitment were less likely to engage in quiescent silence ($b = -.203$). Because the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = -.091$) did not include zero [95% C.I. (-.165, -.024)], it was found that organizational climate had an indirect influence on quiescent silence through its effect on affective commitment. Figure 11 shows the mediation model, and Table 6 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 2a is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 2a is accepted.

Figure 11*Mediation Model for Hypothesis 2a***Table 6***Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 2a*

Variable	Affective Commitment			Quiescent Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .448	.080	< .001	<i>c'</i> .149	.063	.019
Affective Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> -.203	.060	.001

Note. $N = 142$ ***Hypothesis 2b***

Minor violations of assumptions were found based on preliminary analyses (see Figures 12 and 13). However, bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted to combat possible influences of assumption violation.

Figure 12

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Quiescent Silence

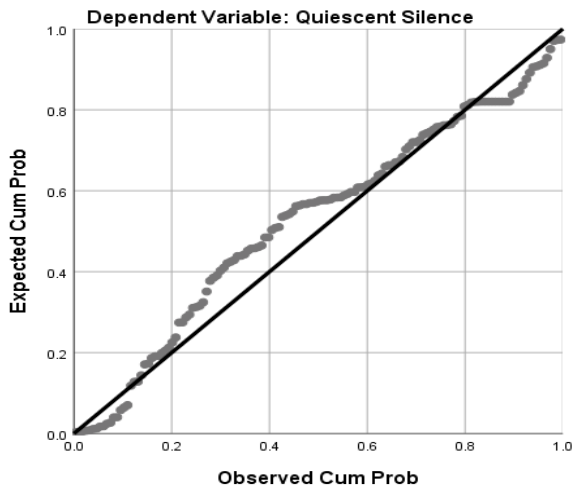
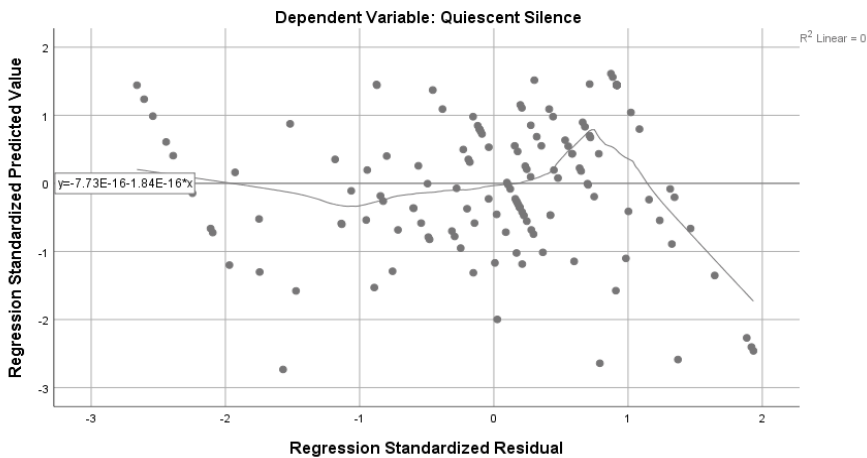


Figure 13

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Quiescent Silence



Again, organizational climate was not found to be a significant predictor of quiescent silence. However, in the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced continuance commitment ($a = .430$) and that employees

higher in continuance commitment were more likely to engage in quiescent silence ($b = .153$). Organizational climate had an indirect influence on quiescent silence via continuance commitment as the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = .066$) did not include zero [95% C.I. .013, .135]. Figure 14 shows the mediation model, and Table 7 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 2b is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 2b is accepted.

Figure 14

Mediation Model for Hypothesis 2b

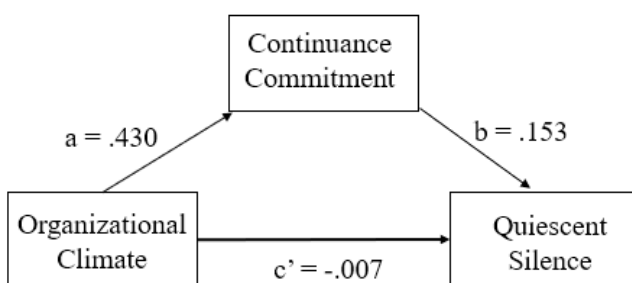


Table 7

Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 2b

Variable	Continuance Commitment			Quiescent Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .430	.093	< .001	<i>c'</i> -.007	.062	.905
Continuance Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> .015	.053	.004

Note. $N = 142$

Hypothesis 2c

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 15 and 16). In the final mediation model, a statistically significant indirect effect of organizational climate through normative commitment on quiescent silence was not found, and Null Hypothesis 2c is accepted.

Figure 15

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Quiescent Silence

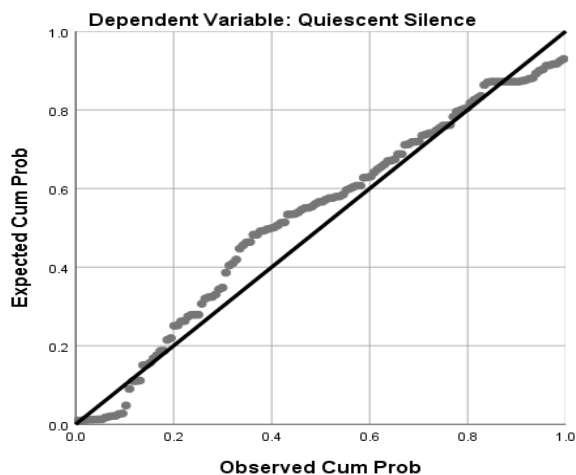
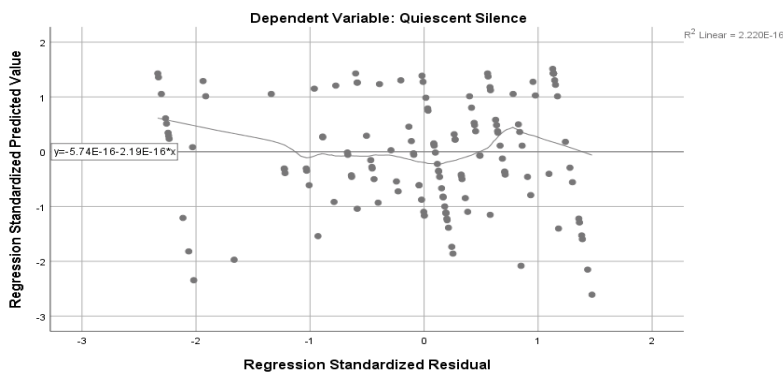


Figure 16

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Quiescent Silence



Hypothesis 3

To investigate the extent to which organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence, three simple mediation analyses were performed using PROCESS. The results for each form of commitment are described separately, with the effect of affective commitment described under Hypothesis 3a, continuance commitment described under Hypothesis 3b, and normative commitment described under Hypothesis 3c.

Hypothesis 3a

I conducted preliminary analyses to assess assumptions and found minor violations (see Figures 17 and 18). As with the prior hypotheses, bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted to combat possible influences of assumption violation.

Figure 17

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective Commitment, Opportunistic Silence

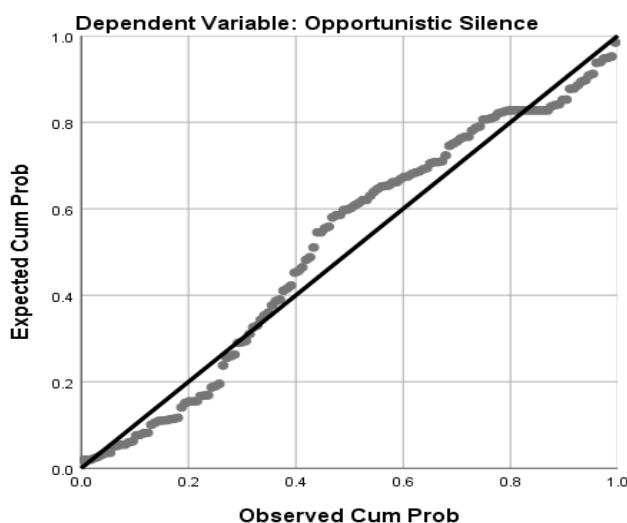
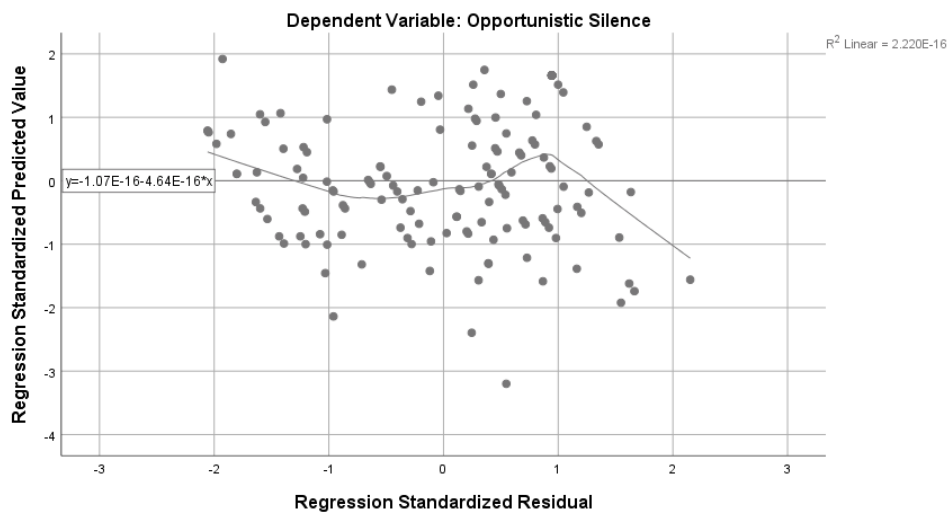
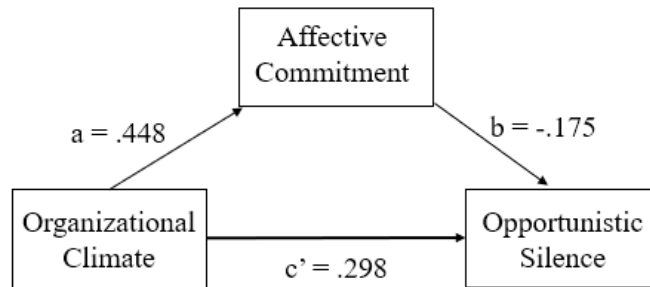


Figure 18

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective Commitment, Opportunistic Silence



Organizational climate was a significant predictor of opportunistic silence, $F(1, 140) = 12.06$, $R^2 = .079$, $p < .001$. In the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced affective commitment ($a = .448$) and that employees higher in affective commitment were less likely to engage in opportunistic silence ($b = -.175$). As the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = -.078$) did not include zero [95% C.I. (-.154, -.019)], organizational climate had an indirect influence on opportunistic silence through the effect it had on affective commitment. Figure 19 shows the mediation model, and Table 8 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 3a is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 3a is accepted.

Figure 19*Mediation Model for Hypothesis 3a***Table 8***Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 3a*

Variable	Affective Commitment			Opportunistic Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .448	.080	< .001	<i>c'</i> .198	.068	< .001
Affective Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> -.175	.065	.008

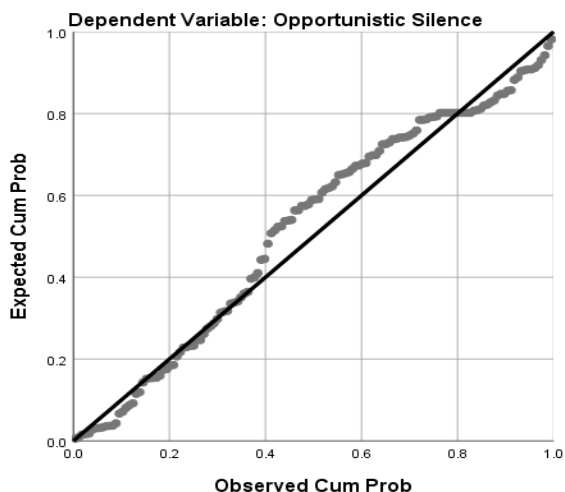
Note. $N = 142$

Hypothesis 3b

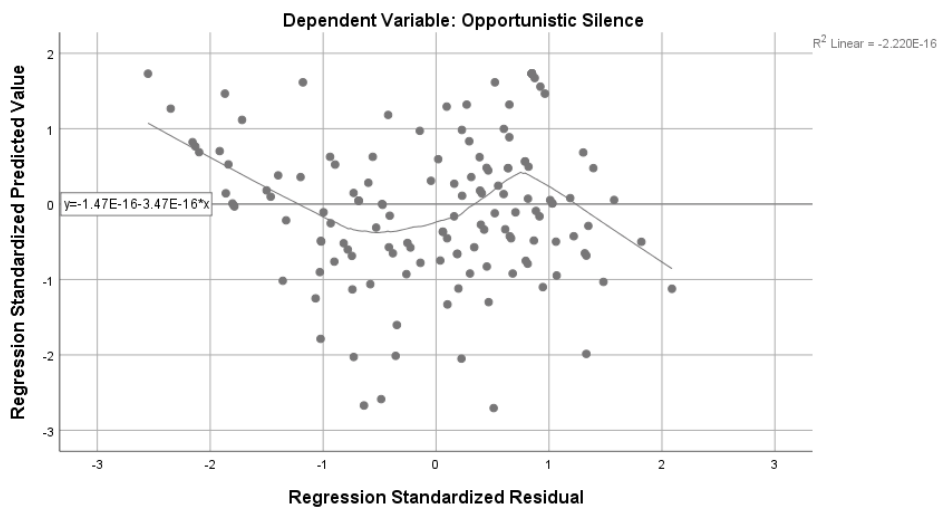
Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 20 and 21). Bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted to protect against possible influences of assumption violation.

Figure 20

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Opportunistic Silence

**Figure 21**

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Opportunistic Silence



As was noted above, organizational climate was a significant predictor of opportunistic silence, $F(1, 140) = 12.06$, $R^2 = .079$, $p < .001$. Additionally, in the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced continuance

commitment ($a = .430$) and that employees higher in continuance commitment were more likely to engage in opportunistic silence ($b = .203$). Organizational climate had an indirect influence on opportunistic silence via continuance commitment as the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = .087$) did not include zero [95% C.I. .026, .180]. Figure 22 shows the mediation model, and Table 9 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 3b is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 3b is accepted.

Figure 22

Mediation Model for Hypothesis 3b

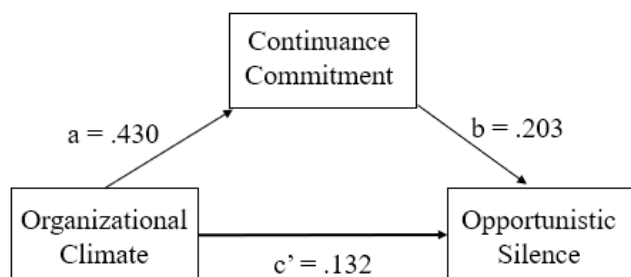


Table 9

Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 3b

Variable	Continuance Commitment			Opportunistic Silence				
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p		
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i>	.430	.093	< .001	<i>c'</i>	.132	.065	.044
Continuance Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i>	.203	.055	< .001	

Note. $N = 142$

Hypothesis 3c

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 23 and 24). In the final mediation model, a statistically significant indirect effect of organizational climate via normative commitment on opportunistic silence was not found, and Null Hypothesis 3c is accepted.

Figure 23

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Opportunistic Silence

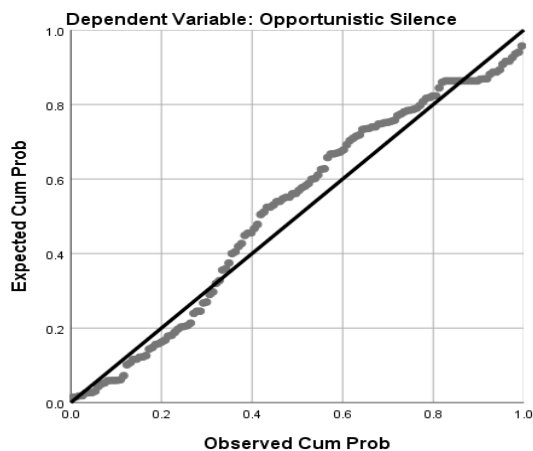
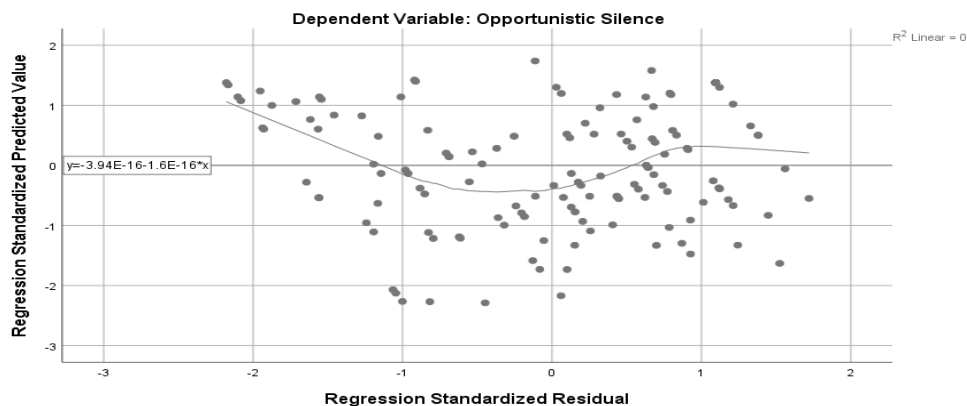


Figure 24

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Opportunistic Silence



Hypothesis 4

To investigate the extent to which organizational commitment (affective; continuance; normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence, three simple mediation analyses were performed using PROCESS. The results for each form of commitment are described separately, with the effect of affective commitment described under Hypothesis 4a, continuance commitment described under Hypothesis 4b, and normative commitment described under Hypothesis 4c.

Hypothesis 4a

I conducted preliminary analyses to assess the assumptions and found minor violations (see Figures 25 and 26). In the final mediation model, a statistically significant indirect effect of organizational climate through normative commitment on prosocial silence was not found, and Null Hypothesis 4a is accepted.

Figure 25

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective Commitment, Prosocial Silence

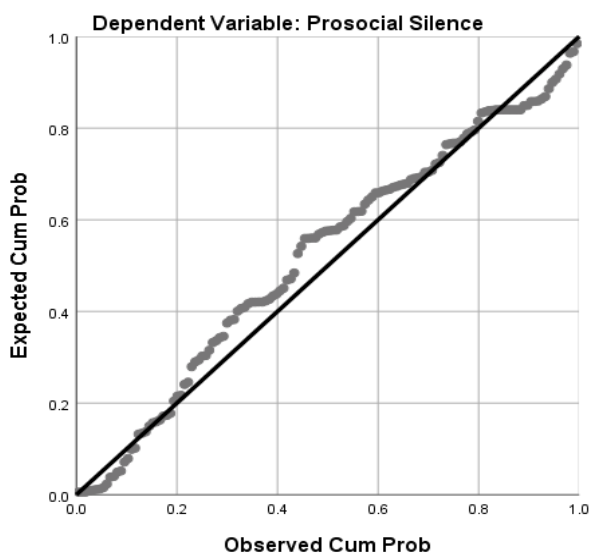
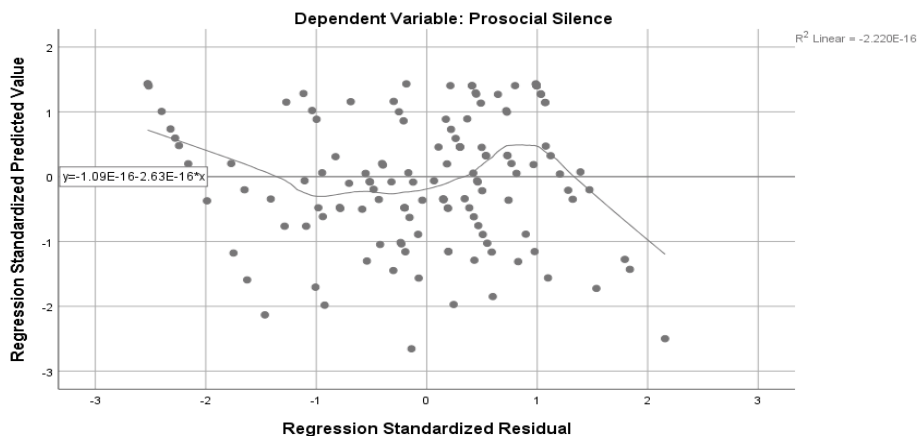


Figure 26

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Affective Commitment, Prosocial Silence



Hypothesis 4b

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 27 and 28). As with other hypotheses, bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted to combat possible influences of assumption violation.

Figure 27

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Prosocial Silence

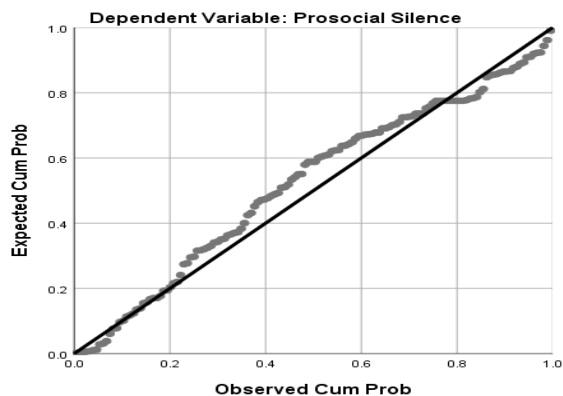
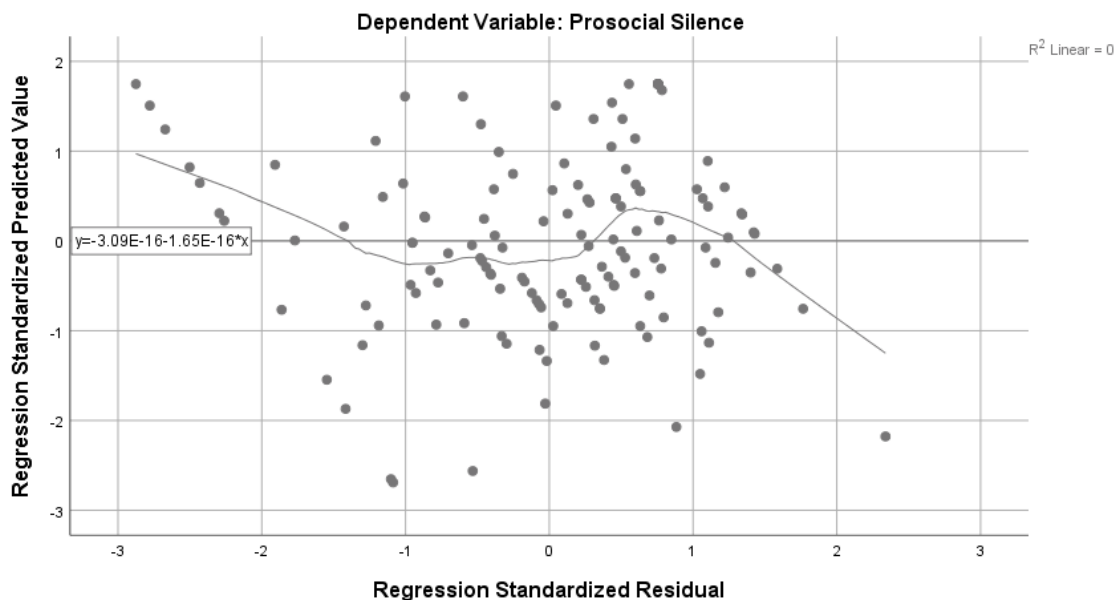
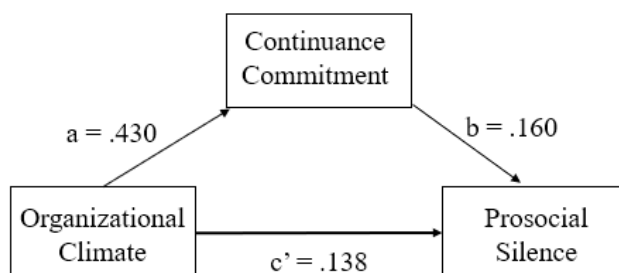


Figure 28

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Continuance Commitment, Prosocial Silence



Organizational climate was a significant predictor of prosocial silence, $F(1, 140) = 12.59$, $R^2 = .083$, $p < .001$. In the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced continuance commitment ($a = .430$) and that employees higher in continuance commitment were more likely to engage in opportunistic silence ($b = .160$). As the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = .069$) did not include zero [95% C.I. .014, .144], organizational climate had an indirect influence on prosocial silence through the effect it had on continuance commitment. Figure 29 shows the mediation model, and Table 11 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 4b is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 4b is accepted.

Figure 29*Mediation Model for Hypothesis 4b***Table 10***Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 4b*

Variable	Continuance Commitment			Prosocial Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .430	.093	< .001	<i>c'</i> .138	.061	.025
Continuance Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> .160	.052	.002

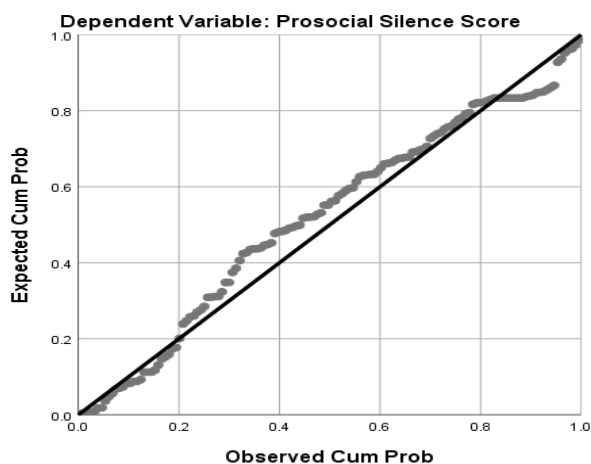
Note. *N* = 142

Hypothesis 4c

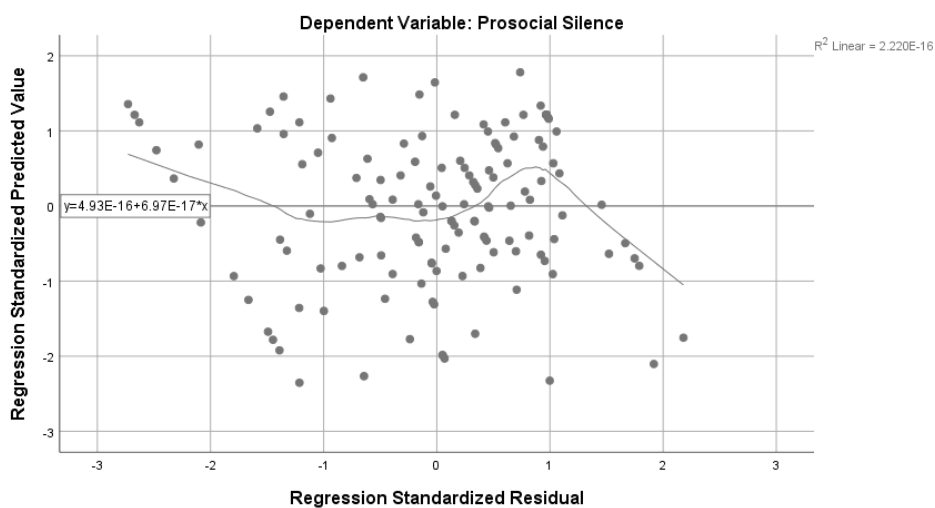
Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the assumptions, and there were minor violations noted (see Figures 30 and 31). To protect against possible influences of assumption violation, bootstrapping using 5000 samples was conducted.

Figure 30

Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Prosocial Silence

**Figure 31**

Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual: Organizational Climate, Normative Commitment, Prosocial Silence



As noted previously, organizational climate was a significant predictor of prosocial silence, $F(1, 140) = 12.59$, $R^2 = .083$, $p < .001$. In the final mediation model, results indicate that organizational climate influenced normative commitment ($a = .731$)

and that employees higher in normative commitment were more likely to engage in prosocial silence ($b = .190$). Organizational climate had an indirect influence on prosocial silence via normative commitment as the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = .139$) did not include zero [95% C.I. .041, .239)], Figure 32 shows the mediation model, and Table 12 presents the model coefficients. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 4c is rejected, and Alternative Hypothesis 4c is accepted.

Figure 32

Mediation Model for Hypothesis 4c

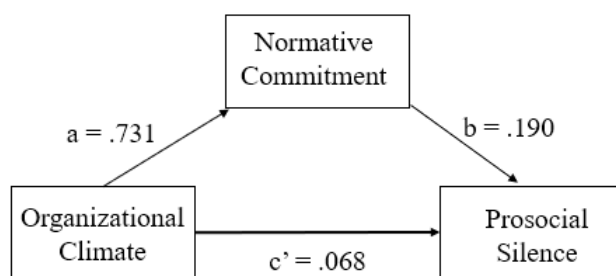


Table 11

Mediation Model Coefficients for Hypothesis 4c

Variable	Normative Commitment			Prosocial Silence		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Organizational Climate	<i>a</i> .731	.080	< .001	<i>c'</i> .069	.072	.345
Normative Commitment	---	---	---	<i>b</i> .191	.060	.002

Note. $N = 142$

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine whether organizational commitment (affective, continuance, normative) mediates the relationship between organizational climate and four specific forms of employee silence: acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial. To understand whether organizational climate had an indirect effect via organizational commitment on employee silence, I conducted multiple mediation analyses using PROCESS. PROCESS enabled me to pursue the nature of the relationship among variables further, as PROCESS does not require that predictor variables first have a statistically significant direct impact on the criterion variables (Hayes, 2009). This was important as I initially did not find that organizational climate significantly predicted acquiescent silence or quiescent silence.

Results indicate that the subtypes of organizational commitment have different influences when acting as a mediator between organizational climate and employee silence. For Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, organizational climate was found to have an indirect effect on acquiescent, quiescent, and opportunistic silence (respectively) through its effect on affective and continuance commitment. Results for Research Question 4 yielded a slightly different outcome, in that continuance and normative commitment were found to influence the relationship between organizational climate and prosocial silence.

Equally important in understanding the influence of organizational commitment as a mediator between organizational climate and employee silence is the directionality of that influence. Again, there are similarities among Research Questions 1-3, as organizational climate was found to predict both affective and continuance commitment.

However, respondents high in affective commitment were less likely to engage in acquiescent, quiescent, and opportunistic silence. In contrast, those high in continuance commitment were more likely to engage in these forms of silence. For Research Question 4, organizational climate was found to predict continuance and normative commitment, with those high in these forms of commitment more likely to engage in prosocial silence.

In Chapter 5, I will further interpret the results within the context of prior research and the theoretical frameworks for this study. I will also discuss study limitations and recommendations for future research. Chapter 5 will close with a description of the implications for social change and concluding remarks regarding the research study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and four specific forms of employee silence: acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial. When confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others, it is ultimately up to the employee to decide whether to blow the whistle or remain silent. However, while it is easy to narrow down response options in a hypothetical situation, the decision in an actual work environment is not so simple. Chou and Chang (2020) noted that organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors influence employee silence. Employees do not work in isolation, and the environment in which they work can influence their attitudes towards various behaviors and outcomes (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Likewise, when deciding how to respond in a difficult situation, employees may respond in a manner that enables them to protect and maintain their available resources (Hobfoll, 1989). I conducted this study to understand how organizational and individual factors may interact as they influence an employee's decision to remain silent when confronted with the unethical organizational behavior of others.

Interpretation of Findings

Results from this study indicate that organizational climate has an indirect influence on employee silence through organizational commitment. However, the form of organizational commitment directly impacts whether employees are more or less likely to remain silent. While organizational commitment was found to have some mediating effect between organizational climate and employee silence, it did not fully mediate the

relationship, suggesting that other variables may be involved. The findings for each hypothesis are described in the following sections.

Hypothesis 1

As a direct predictor, organizational climate was not found to have a statistically significant influence on acquiescent silence. Higher scores on the ECQ suggest that participants perceive a more ethical workplace environment. These findings are consistent with Taylor and Curtis (2018), who found that employees are more likely to report unethical organizational behavior in organizational climates that foster ethical behavior. The social information processing theory would predict that social context helps employees determine how to respond within a particular context (Salancik & Pfeffer). Therefore, employees may report misconduct since that is consistent with workplace norms. However, examining the indirect influence of organizational climate through organizational commitment provides insight into how organizational and individual factors may contribute to acquiescent silence. When evaluating the results, it is critical to consider the entire model, as the form of organizational commitment impacted the likelihood of employees engaging in acquiescent silence given the organizational climate.

As a mediating factor, affective commitment was found to negatively influence acquiescent silence within an ethical organizational climate. Previous researchers have similarly found that employees high in affective commitment are more likely to report unethical organizational behavior (Cintya & Yustina, 2019; Verschuuren, 2020). Likewise, Meyer and Allen (1991) described how organizational values similar to an

employee's values can contribute to affective commitment. Such individuals may be more motivated to maintain those organizational values and perceive they can make a difference and affect change by reporting unethical organizational behavior.

However, continuance commitment had a different effect. Within the mediation model, continuance commitment was found to positively influence acquiescent silence within an ethical organizational climate. When evaluating this outcome, it is imperative to note that individuals high in continuance commitment often remain with the organization because they feel they have no other options to work elsewhere (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Such a perspective reflects a certain resignation to one's circumstances, which could influence decisions made within their current organization. Adamska and Jurek (2017) found that employees engage in acquiescent silence when they do not believe that voicing their opinions will bring about change. While the organizational climate may promote ethical behavior, individuals high in continuance commitment may lack the confidence to believe that they can affect change and passively accept the unethical organizational behavior of others.

Hypothesis 2

Organizational climate was also not found to directly predict quiescent silence. Similar to Hypothesis 1, this is a predictable finding since quiescent silence is characterized by remaining silent out of fear (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). Previous researchers demonstrated that an ethical organizational climate promotes ethical behavior (Taylor & Curtis, 2018) and establishes channels that encourage communication to enable employees to voice their concerns (Johansson & Carey, 2016; Scheetz & Fogarty,

2019). This finding is consistent with social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), as employees have likely learned from the social context how reports of misconduct will be treated with the necessary respect and attention. However, examining the results through the overall mediation model again illustrates how organizational and individual factors interact to influence quiescent silence.

Like acquiescent silence, individuals high in affective commitment were less likely to engage in quiescent silence within an ethical organizational environment. Meyer et al. (1998) described how strong relational ties contribute to an employee's decision to remain with an organization, thus fostering affective commitment. In such environments, employees feel respected and trust that issues will be handled if reports are made (Brink et al., 2018; Kanojia et al., 2020). Thus, individuals high in affective commitment are less likely to fear repercussions if they report employee misconduct within an ethical climate.

Although employees may have positive connections with others, the role of fear cannot be underestimated when examining quiescent silence. As a mediating factor, continuance commitment positively influenced quiescent silence within an ethical organizational climate. Individuals high in continuance commitment were more likely to engage in quiescent silence, suggesting that despite an ethical organizational climate promoting ethical behavior and encouraging communication, employees still feared reporting employee misconduct. In fact, of all the analyses, the smallest confidence interval for the indirect effect of organizational climate on employee silence occurred through continuance commitment to quiescent silence, providing further support for the detrimental effects of cumulative fear. Meyer et al. (1998) characterized continuance

commitment as remaining with an organization out of fear of what would be lost if they left. It is conceivable that this fear of change influences other decisions within the workplace. Employees remain silent, fearing the consequences should they report misconduct. These findings are consistent with findings from previous researchers suggesting employees remain silent out of fear (Credo et al., 2016; Gan, 2020; Kiewitz et al., 2016; Latan et al., 2021; Mirzapour & Baoosh, 2018; Nawawi & Salin, 2019). Thus, as predicted by the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees who fear what they could lose if they were to report misconduct may use silence to protect the resources they have invested with the organization.

Hypothesis 3

Unlike acquiescent and quiescent silence, organizational climate was found to significantly predict opportunistic silence. This was an interesting finding since opportunistic silence is characterized by remaining silent for personal gain (Knoll & van Dick, 2013), and higher scores on the ECQ indicate a more ethical organizational climate. Previous researchers have suggested that an ethical climate can foster ethical behavior and encourage employees to act in a manner that upholds the organization's ethical values (Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2016). When confronted with employee misconduct, engaging in opportunistic silence would appear to go against values promoted within an ethical climate. Examining the influence of organizational commitment in mediating the relationship between organizational climate and opportunistic silence can provide further insight.

Similar to acquiescent and quiescent silence, as a mediating factor, affective commitment negatively influences opportunistic silence within an ethical organizational climate. Again, the relational component that contributes to affective commitment, such that individuals remain with the organization partly because of their connection with others (Meyer et al., 1998), appears to be an important factor in this equation. Taylor and Curtis (2018) found that employees are more willing to report misconduct when they have a trusting relationship with others. The results from this study indicate a similar outcome. As demonstrated through their affective commitment, the employee's connection with the organization encourages employees to report misconduct even if doing so may not be in their own personal best interest.

Yet again, a different outcome emerges when employees are committed to an organization for other reasons. Within an ethical climate, continuance commitment was found to increase the likelihood that individuals would engage in opportunistic silence. Individuals high in continuance commitment stay with the organization based on need (Meyer et al., 1998). Previous researchers have also found that individuals remain silent to protect themselves from the perceived loss that could occur if they were to report misconduct (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Monzani et al., 2016). Even though employees work for an organization that promotes ethical values, results from this study suggest that employees who feel they have limited options if they were to lose their current job may engage in opportunistic silence. Such an outcome is consistent with the predictions of the conservation of resources theory which indicates that individuals will behave in a way that protects and maintains their current resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

Hypothesis 4

Similar to opportunistic silence, organizational climate was found to directly predict prosocial silence. This finding is more expected as prosocial silence involves remaining silent to protect others or the organization (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Based on this definition, prosocial silence could be viewed as an alternate form of ethical behavior. According to Victor and Cullen (1988), an ethical climate informs employees how to respond when confronted with an ethical dilemma. If an organization promotes the importance of trust and relationship-building among employees, then remaining silent to protect a coworker could be viewed as an extension of that organizational climate. However, organizational climate is only part of the model, and it is also necessary to consider the mediating influence of organizational commitment.

Affective commitment was not found to have a significant mediating influence between organizational climate and prosocial silence. This could be because individuals high in affective commitment share similar values as the organization (Meyer et al., 1998) and may be more likely to protect the organization as a whole rather than specific employees. Alternatively, continuance commitment was found to positively influence prosocial silence within an ethical organizational climate. This is a unique finding since continuance commitment may lead employees to engage in self-protective behaviors rather than helping others. Meyer and Allen (1991) explained how employees high in continuance commitment consider various costs should they no longer be employed with the organization. Therefore, some employees may remain silent, believing that doing so

will protect the organization from the negative consequences of revealing the misconduct and, by extension, protect their current position.

Finally, as a mediating factor, normative commitment was found to positively influence prosocial silence within an ethical organizational climate. Again, an employee's perception of why they remain with the organization seems to be an important factor. Individuals high in normative commitment stay with the organization out of a sense of obligation or duty (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees may remain silent when they see the unethical organizational behavior of others as a way of showing their gratitude. Previous researchers have found that some employees engage in silence to develop or maintain relationships (Hawass, 2016; Kirrane et al., 2017). It is thus possible that individuals who feel indebted to their employer engage in prosocial silence to foster relationships and perhaps demonstrate their loyalty to others.

Limitations of the Study

Results suggest that among the 142 participants, there was some diversity among the sample related to gender, age, tenure with the organization, and industry type. However, these are only basic demographics, and numerous other factors could limit how representative the sample is of the larger population. While I achieved a sufficient sample size to conduct the analyses, 142 respondents are only a small fraction of the larger U.S. workforce. Additionally, participants were primarily recruited from an online survey panel. According to Groves et al. (2009), respondents who sign up for such panels may be more willing to participate in surveys, which in and of itself could contribute to homogeneity within the sample.

The focus of the study was to understand factors that may contribute to employee silence when confronted with unethical organizational behavior. Given the sensitivity of the topic, the potential for social desirability bias also should be considered. The survey was administered anonymously, but responses could reflect what participants perceived to be more positive reasons for remaining silent rather than admitting fault in themselves or others. Likewise, Ward et al. (2017) noted that participants completing online surveys may be more likely to respond quickly rather than thoughtfully. Several respondents completed the survey for this study very quickly. This raises the question as to whether they responded truthfully or if they just selected options to get through the survey as fast as possible.

Finally, the model for this study only included organizational climate and organizational commitment as potential factors that could impact employee silence when confronted with unethical organizational behavior. It is possible that other variables could further mediate what effect organizational climate has on employee silence. Additionally, I created the model based on existing literature assuming that organizational climate and organizational commitment predict employee silence. However, there is also research to support employee silence as a predictive factor influencing job attitudes (see Astvik et al., 2021; Chou & Chang, 2020; Knoll et al., 2019; Mannan & Kashif, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Thus, other causal paths may more accurately describe the nature of the relationship among these variables.

Recommendations

I used a quantitative, cross-sectional design that involved administering surveys to members of the general working population to examine whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and four specific forms of employee silence (acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial). While findings from the survey provide insight into the relationship among variables, the results cannot provide a qualitative explanation of why this may be. Additional research that explores what components of the organizational climate most contribute to organizational commitment could illuminate some of the reasons why some employees remain silent while others report the unethical organizational behavior of others.

Likewise, previous researchers have explored how organizational commitment may influence reporting behaviors (e.g., Brink et al., 2018; Cintya & Yustina, 2019; Taylor & Curtis, 2018; Verschuuren, 2020). Findings from this study add to his literature as employees high in affective commitment were less likely to remain silent, given the organizational climate. However, continuance commitment and normative commitment were found to positively influence employee silence, given the organizational climate. Further research could explore how fear of losing one's job (continuance commitment) and obligation to remain (normative commitment) contribute to remaining silent when confronted with employee misconduct.

Participants in this study represented diverse industries, including education, for-profit organizations, government, healthcare, and non-profits. As organizational climate reflects the "perceptions people have of their work settings" (Schneider, 1975, p.473), it

would be expected that different organizations have varying organizational climates. Organizational climate can inform employees how to respond to specific circumstances (Jacobson et al., 2020; Kaptein, 2020) and, in extreme circumstances, can lead to a suppression of ideas (Borry, 2017; Pinder & Harlos, 2001; van Rooij & Fine, 2018). I did not examine differences in how organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence among industries. Exploring whether employee silence is more pronounced in some industries than others could extend the current literature to further explain how organizational commitment contributes to employee silence within varying organizational climates.

When considering the relationship among organizational climate, organizational commitment, and employee silence, it is imperative to note that I determined the mediation model based on prior research that suggests organizational climate and organizational commitment influence employee silence (Borry, 2017; van Rooij & Fine, 2018; Wombacher & Felfe, 2017). However, Hayes (2022) noted that there may be other ways to describe the relationship among variables in a mediation model. As noted in the limitations section above, it is possible that employee silence may predict organizational commitment. Future research could examine what influence employee silence may have on organizational commitment and either confirm or refute the appropriateness of the model used in this study.

Finally, other factors could mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. Hayes (2022) cautioned against stating a variable is fully mediated by another since there could always be another factor that influences the

relationship. Chou and Chang (2020) indicated that organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors contribute to employee silence. Likewise, previous researchers suggested that employee silence likely results from the culmination of various factors (e.g., Donovan et al., 2016; Lam & Xu, 2019; Monzani et al., 2016; Park et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020). Thus, additional research is needed to understand whether other factors may mediate the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence together with, or perhaps instead of, organizational climate.

Implications

The results from this study illuminate the complexities associated with an employee's decision to remain silent when confronted with unethical organizational behavior. Chou and Chang (2020) explained how various organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors can contribute to employee silence. However, if the decision to blow the whistle or remain silent depended solely on a single factor, it would be easy to create an environment that ensures employees report all misconduct. Though leaders may attempt to create an organizational climate that encourages reporting misconduct, having an available reporting channel may not be sufficient (Chordiya et al., 2020). Thus, the difficulty lies in trying to understand how various factors may interact to inform the reporting decision.

From an organizational perspective, positive social change can result as leaders work to create ethical work environments and consider employee perspectives as part of developing a healthy work environment. Findings from this study suggest that within an ethical climate, employees high in affective commitment are less likely to engage in

employee silence when they become aware of deviant behavior. As such, leaders could learn from employees what organizational attributes contribute to a genuine desire to stay and foster an environment that promotes the health of the overall organization. However, it is also important to keep in mind that employees high in continuance commitment, and to some extent, normative commitment are more likely to remain silent. This might suggest a fear of change or loss due to unknown consequences should employees report misconduct. Leaders who recognize how fear of change can influence decisions are better equipped to proactively allay those fears.

As continuance commitment is characterized by the costs employees believe they will incur if they leave the organization (Meyer et al., 1998), we should also consider what employees may do to protect against such loss. In the conservation of resources theory, Hobfoll (1989) suggested that individuals act in a way to obtain and protect available resources. This study adds to research in this area as continuance commitment was the single type of organizational commitment that positively predicted all four forms of employee silence (acquiescent, quiescent, opportunistic, and prosocial) given an ethical organizational climate. This would suggest that such employees perhaps want to maintain the status quo, and consistent with prior research, remain silent as a coping mechanism to protect the resources they have invested in the organization (He et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

Organizational misconduct can have dire consequences in losses to the organization (Patra, 2016) and its contribution to an unhealthy work environment (Park et al., 2020). It is thus in an organization's best interest to identify and address unethical

organizational behavior before it leads to irreparable damage. Encouraging employees to report misconduct can enable leaders to address a problem internally and enact change to create a more positive work environment (Near & Miceli, 2016). Findings from this study can impact organizational practice as they inform on potential barriers to whistleblowing. By understanding how individual and organizational factors interact to contribute to employee silence, leaders can explore various options given their unique organizational climates to encourage reporting employee misconduct before minor issues become large problems. Creating an ethical climate is an important first step. However, we cannot forget that findings from this study indicate that organizational commitment has a mediating influence on the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. Leaders must also consider how various factors may impact personal perceptions that contribute to an employee's willingness to protect the health of the organization compared to their personal interests.

Conclusions

When confronted with unethical organizational behavior, employees may find it difficult to determine the appropriate course of action. This is no simple decision, and when competing interests are pitted against each other, employees may respond in a manner that protects themselves rather than benefits the organization. Leaders must first recognize how various organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors contribute to employee silence to encourage reporting employee misconduct. Results from this study illustrate the indirect influence that organizational climate has on employee silence through organizational commitment. Furthermore, different types of organizational

commitment influence employee silence in different ways. Creating an ethical climate that encourages reporting is an important first step. However, leaders need to remain in touch with their employees to learn what contributes to a genuine desire to stay while simultaneously protecting against employees getting so comfortable that they will do anything to maintain the status quo. Within an ethical climate, organizational commitment can contribute to or protect against employee silence. It is up to organizational leaders to understand employee needs and empower them to act in a way that benefits both the employee and the organization.

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206. <https://doi.org/10.1086/651257>

Appendix A: Permission to use Ethical Climate Questionnaire

PsycTESTS Citation:

Victor, B., & Cullen, J. B. (1988). Ethical Climate Questionnaire--Modified [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t35386-000>

Instrument Type:

Inventory/Questionnaire

Test Format:

The measure has 26 items that are measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = completely false to 5 = completely true.

Source:

Victor, Bart, & Cullen, John B. (1988). The organizational bases of ethical work climates. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol 33(1), 101-125. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2392857>, © 1998 by SAGE Publications. Reproduced by Permission of SAGE Publications.

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Appendix B: Permission to use Organizational Commitment Scales

Note: Test name created by PsycTESTS

PsycTESTS Citation:

Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Organizational Commitment Scales [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t10076-000>

Instrument Type:

Rating Scale

Test Format:

Responses are made on 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree).

Source:

Meyer, John P., Allen, Natalie J., & Smith, Catherine A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 78(4), 538-551. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.4.538>

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Appendix C: Permission to use Employee Silence Survey

Knoll, Michael <michael.knoll@uni-leipzig.de>

Fri 7/30/2021 12:12 AM

Reply all

Forward

More actions

Dear Jennifer,

thank you for your interest in using my scale. Please go ahead. I am looking forward to learning more about your research in the future.

Best

Michael.

Dr. Michael Knoll

Lehrstuhl für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie

Universität Leipzig | Institut für Psychologie – Wilhelm Wundt

Email: michael.knoll@uni-leipzig.de

Web: <https://www.lw.uni-leipzig.de/institut-fuer-psychologie-wilhelm-wundt/arbeitsgruppen/arbeits-und-organisationspsychologie/team/dr-michael-knoll/>

Konzeption und Leitung des Programms „Führungskräfteentwicklung“:
<https://app1.edoobox.com/UL-WB/Wbkurse/WWB/Kurs.ed.614458?edref=UL-WB>

Aktuelle Pressemitteilung zu Schweigen in Organisationen: <https://www.uni-leipzig.de/newsdetail/artikel/probleme-bei-der-arbeit-lieber-ansprechen-2021-07-02/>

Von: Jennifer Sherer <jennifer.sherer2@waldenu.edu>

Datum: Freitag, 30. Juli 2021 um 02:23

An: Michael Knoll <michael.knoll@uni-leipzig.de>

Betreff: [Extern] Request to use Employee Silence Survey

Dear Dr. Knoll,

My name is Jennifer Sherer and I am a doctoral student at Walden University in the United States. For my dissertation, I am examining whether organizational commitment

mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee silence. I believe the employee silence scale you developed to measure four forms of employee silence (Knoll & van Dick, 2013) would be an effective instrument to assess employee silence for my study. I am contacting you to seek your approval to use your employee silence survey for my own research. If you have questions or need anything further from me, please let me know. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Sherer
Walden University PhD student

Appendix D: Survey Invitation

Online survey study seeks participants who witnessed employee misconduct and chose to not to report the offense

There is a new study called “*Organizational Commitment as a Mediator Between Organizational Climate and Employee Silence*” that will examine factors that may impact why employees choose not to report the organizational misconduct of others.

This survey is part of the doctoral study for Jennifer Sherer, a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

About the study:

- One 30–60-minute online survey
- To protect your privacy, no names will be collected

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old or older
- Witnessed employee misconduct and chose not to report the offense

**To confidentially volunteer, click
the following link:
[survey link]**

Appendix E: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about why employees choose not to report the organizational misconduct of others. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study seeks 138 volunteers who are:

- 18 years old or older
- Witnessed employee misconduct and chose not to report the offense

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jennifer Sherer, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to look at how organizational climate and organizational commitment might influence the decision to report organizational misconduct.

Procedures:

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

Here are some sample questions:

- I remained silent at work because of fear of negative consequences.
- In this company, people look out for each other's good.
- This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So, everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Please note, only fully complete surveys can be used. If there are questions you do not want to answer, you can exit the survey at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. Results from this study may provide insight about how organizational commitment might influence the decision to report misconduct within a particular organizational climate. Organizational leaders could use that information to create strategies to help overcome barriers to reporting misconduct. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share a summary of the overall results on [ScholarWorks](#).

Payment:

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Privacy:

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept anonymous, within the limits of the law. The researcher will not ask for your name at any time. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by storing on a password-protected cloud server that only I can access. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask questions of the researcher via email at Jennifer.sherer2@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at [redacted]. Walden University's approval number for this study is 11-02-21-0977215. It expires on November 1, 2022.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by clicking "I agree" to begin the survey.

- I agree
- I do not want to take this survey