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THE UNSPOKEN BURDENS: OVERCOMMITMENT, DEFENSIVE SILENCE, AND FREE-RIDING IN ACADEMIA

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Over-Commitment, Defensive Silence, Free Riding, University Faculty	The present study aims to find out the relationship between over commitment, defensive silence and free riding in university faculty. The topic appears to delve into the complex and unacknowledged challenges faced by individuals working in the academic environments. It was hypothesized that there were likely to be relationship between over commitment, the defensive silence and free riding. A sample of 218 teachers was taken from both private and public sectors. Sample was calculated via G-Power (Faul, 2009) as data was collected by using purposive sampling technique. The over commitment scale, defensive silence scale and free riding scale was used as assessment measures. Data was analyzed by SPSS. Reliability analysis, correlation, regression analysis was used to assess the data. Correlation analysis showed significant relationship between defensive silence and free riding but showed no relationship between over commitment and free riding and defensive silence was found significant predictors of free riding. Additional independent sample t-test and ANOVA was used to find the mean differences. Thus, the results provide important and significant information in reaching the desired conclusion and making decision, The result is discussed in the light of prior literature. The findings will be beneficial for the betterment of academic professional environment in the universities.
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INTRODUCTION

It has been seen that mental health problems prevalence has increasing in past decades. It is found higher in the female as compared to males. High effort and low reward along with over commitment increase depression like health problems (Porru, Robroek, Bultmann, Portoghese, Campagna & Burdorf, 2021). Mild psychiatric illness can be consequence of over commitment (Diekmann, Böckelmann, Karlsen, Lux & Thielmann, 2020; Han, Lee & Kim, 2023). Now a days in workplace there is always competition and not sharing knowledge, to decrease the risk of

knowledge hiding behavioral environment (Anand, Offergelt & Anand, 2022; Dutta, Thomas, Shiva, Papa & Cuomo, 2024). Likewise, over-commitment in the teachers referred as teachers psychologically attached with profession of teaching, students, professional association, and colleagues (Yu, Jiang & Kei, 2021). It is a concept with strong desire and excessive efforts in group of behaviors, emotions, and attitudes to be respected and recognized (Liao, Li & Huang, 2021). The commitment with respect to organization has 3-types of commitments: continuous, normative and affective commitment (Đorđević, Koderman & Milanović, 2020). Thus, affective commitment is the identification and emotional linking of employees with their organizations which means that their commitment to stay in organization is because of their willingness to stay.

The employee with this commitment show strong belief and motivation in organizational goals (Hadi & Tentama, 2020). Also, continuous commitment describes that employee estimates the cost and benefits. If the cost will be high about the employee leaving his organization, then in that case he will stay (Đorđević, Koderman & Milanović, 2020, 2024). Moreover, Employees in normative commitment stay in organization because employees have this feeling of obligation that keeps stay in organization. For instance; scholarships, help from organization in many ways (Harini, Terminanto, Perkasa, Pandaryasi & Brahma, 2022). Silence of employees are the consequences of injustice at work (Qi & Ramayah, 2022). Employees with the fear of receiving negative reactions of superiors before sharing news or information, prefers silence in order to protect themselves through defensive silence. Mechanism of protection is defensive silence that is response to any kind of external threat that will cause fear (Dedahanov, Abdurazzakov, Fayzullaev & Sun, 2021). Employee tend to remain silent to ignore dispute, avoid conflict, and avoidance of disapproval from supervisor and colleagues because they feel it will be risky for their job to speak up, may lead towards disputes (Khalid et al., 2020; Wang, Li, Liu & Zaggia, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple determinants of commitment were studied as identified main determinants included the effort reward imbalance, depression, general self-efficacy, perceived stress, burnout factors (Haseli, Sheikh, Wang, Tomaskova & Tirkolaee, 2021; Khalil & Siddiqui, 2021). Effort reward imbalance, self-selection tendency and narcissism were examined in two groups; management students were compared with the student teachers, and business leaders were compared with practicing teachers (Schmitt, 2021). In the profession of teaching tendency of self-selection was confirmed. Teachers showed narcissism than business leaders, student teachers also showed narcissism than other management students. The student teacher exhibit more narcissism than practicing teachers maybe because of stressful conditions at classroom as teachers gets less reward than business leaders. The failure to speak up can also stifle discussions that could lead to positive institutional or policy changes. Lower narcissism leads to reinforcement of reward imbalance and to more over commitment, it increases risk in profession of teaching through crisis of gratification institutional pressures, own ambition, strong sense of professional duty. Another research collected data from 389 employees with three times lag, with gap of 40 days each.

Ambition of the study were to investigate relationship between employee silence (relational silence, defensive silence, ineffective silence) and hiding knowledge (playing dumb, evasive hiding, and rationalized hiding) and also examine the mediator psychological contract breach (Khalil & Siddiqui, 2021). The results confirm that “employee silence” and knowledge-hiding positively correlates with each other, significantly mediated by psychological contract breach (Bari, Ghaffar & Ahmad, 2020; Liao, Li & Huang, 2024). These challenges overcommitment, defensive silence, and free-riding—often have a significant impact on productivity, personal well-being and the overall functioning of academic institutions. In this linking, it often happens due to institutional pressures, personal ambition, or the strong sense of professional duty. In academic settings, this might manifest in group research projects, committee work, or teaching activities. The literature on self-determination theory, has identified the needs of autonomy and relatedness among employees in different situations and contexts. After relationships and action, challenges in implementation of compensation systems emerged, that is, distributive justice issues under individual based compensation and free-riding issues under team-based compensation.

The employee silence cost high and has lower commitment levels, it can decrease normative commitment and organizational effectiveness (Saif et al., 2021). On other hand, Free riders are self-interested and rational people who gets benefit from group services without participating as others from the group, any colleague who do not work enough in a group project but get profits from it such as professional repercussions, judgment from colleagues, or losing career advancement prospects (Frémeaux et al., 2024). Free riding reduced teamwork productivity and limited the content and skills the team should acquire. It promotes demotivation and affect the contribution of hardworking employees to group work (Gedamu & Shewangezaw, 2022). It also can be in the form that when citizen do not vote in elections. States also free ride by not providing as per their promises when they address citizen and solve as well as national and international problems, but they acquire benefits from positive outcomes. may also examine the frustration and burnout experienced by individuals who feel they are doing more than their fair share. The entrepreneurial performance of team/group influenced by the interaction between study variables (Chakrabarty, 2021; Gedamu, & Shewangezaw, 2022; Hall, & Buzwell, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

Quantitative research method with correlational strategy was used to study relationship amid over-commitment, defensive silence, and free riding in university faculty. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from teachers. A total of 218 faculty members (117 males, 101 Female) participated in study. Data was collected from lecturers, assistant professors and professors via questionnaires.

Over Commitment (OC) Measures

Effort Reward Imbalance (Siegrist et al., 2014) has third dimension, over commitment was used to measure the participants over commitment. This 6-item questionnaire assessed faculty over

commitment with their work. In this connection, Responses were recorded on 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). So, it has strong reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$).

Defensive silence (DS) Measures

Employee silence scale (Dyne et al., 2003) has subscale defensive silence was used to measure defensive silence among faculty members. This 5 items questionnaire assess defensive silence in university teachers. Responses were recorded on 7-point Likert scale in which 1 is indicated as strongly disagree and 7 is denoted as strongly agree. It has strong reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$).

Free Riding (FR) Measures

Withholding effort questionnaire (Kidwell & Robie, 2003). 5-point Likert scale assess free riders among organization. Responses were recorded on 5 items ranging from 1 to 5, 1 is denoted as never, 2 is rarely, 3 is sometimes, 4 is often and 5 is frequently, has strong reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = .77$).

Procedure

Supervisor and DGC approved the topic of the research. Participants were first provided with informed consent with details of purpose of study and participant rights. After signing consent form, they were given questionnaire assessing their over-commitment, defensive silence and free riding at workplace. Upon completion participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. A Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess relationship amid over commitment, defensive silence and free riding. Linear Regression was used to test hypothesis. Effect size was examined per criteria of Cohen in comparison. Statistics were set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The results of current study have been produced in this section that represents the leading and main outcomes. The reliabilities for scales were computed as correlation amid variables were calculated amid scales, regression was used to determine predictors of withholding effort and its scale.

Table 1

Correlation Between Over Commitment, Defensive Silence And Free Riding (N=218).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
Over commitment	14.94	3.19	-	.16*	.02
Defensive Silence	15.95	5.96	-	-	.18**
Free Riding	17.44	5.89	-	-	-

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationship amid over commitment, defensive silence and free riding. Results revealed positive correlation amid over-commitment (OC) and defensive silence (DS). Conversely, significant, no correlation was found between OC and free riding (FR). Yet, correlation between defensive silence with free riding were positive significantly.

Table 2
Simple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Free Riding (N=218).

Variables	Free Riding		
	B	β	SE
Over commitment	-.01	-.01	.12
Defensive Silence	.18	.18**	.06
R2		.03	
F (2, 215)		3.75	

Note, B= Unstandardized data, SE= Coefficient Standard Error, β = Standard Coefficient Beta

The result of simple linear regression is explained overall by model summary is 30% with $F(2, 215) = 3.75, p < .001$ in university faculty. The result showed that defensive silence predicts free riding ($\beta = .18^{**}$). In this connection, the over commitment does not predict free riding ($\beta = -.01, p < .001$) in university faculty because the person who is over committed will never go for free riding.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the research was to find out the relationship between over commitment, defensive silence and free riding. There is positively correlated significant relationship found between over-commitment and defensive silence (Yu et al., 2021). The defensive silence also positively significant with free riding (Bari et al., 2020). Result indicate that defensive silence significantly predicts free riding in university teachers. The teacher who experiences injustice in workplace normally become silent and starts only spending time in useless tasks (Dyne et al., 2003). Over commitment as has opposite aspects as compared to free riding and defensive, so it does not predict free riding. Thus, as over commitment is that you are committed to work hard for the organization but the defensive silence is different which is to hold on ideas or new concepts to themselves and not to share it because they have fear they might get into problem. It is human nature that over committed persons' values do not allow them to go for free riding (Bari et al., 2020).

Moreover, normative commitment is characterized as employee withhold opinions, concerns and ideas purposely to himself at work. Free riding on the other hand is different which is that people do not put as much contribution and commitment with their work but gain the benefits as they are part of that project and organization. That is why over commitment and free riding does not correlate with each other. While defensive silence has relationship and it also predicts free riding, as both have negative aspects, in the defensive silence they do not contribute by sharing their opinions or the concerns as same as free riding in which they do not contribute by

putting effort in a group project. Therefore, the teacher hides the knowledge from the students but continue getting all the benefits from the organization or educational institute (Gedamu & Shewangezaw, 2022). These finding reflect the clear picture about the people working in the academia.

Limitations & Suggestions

The data was collected from universities of one single city. It is suggested that faculty members from other universities should also be contacted. Similarly, it is quantitative research, therefore for in-depth information it is thus, suggested that qualitative research should also be carried out.

CONCLUSION

The findings of study indicate that higher over-commitment levels are positively associated with increased defensive silence, indicate that excessive dedicated teachers may withhold their concerns due to fear of negative consequences. While higher defensive silence is linked with higher free riding among the teachers of universities, suggests that person who abstain from expressing their opinions and concerns may untie themselves from collective responsibilities. Furthermore, these findings suggest organizations the need to address defensive silence and over-commitment to alleviate free riding among employee's behaviors. Thus, the organizations should implement the freedom of speech, open communication to foster the collaborative work environment.

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