

The Survey of the Relationship between Quality of Work Life and Organizational Silence (Case Study: Employees of Central Office of Fars Province Education Organization)

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to survey the relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence of the employees of the Central Office of Fars Province Education Organization. The present cross-sectional study was conducted in 2014. For this research, 210 employees of the Central Office of Fars Province Education Organization were selected by stratified random sampling. Questionnaires of work life quality and organizational silence were used to collect data. The achieved data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics by SPSS and SMART PLS software. The result of this study shows that there is a negative and significant relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence. There is a significant negative relationship between quality of work life, and defensive and submissive silence of organizational silence aspects; while, there is no significant relationship between quality of work life and pro-social silence. Also, there is a significant negative relationship between all aspects of the quality of work life and organizational silence.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life, Organizational Silence, Education Organization.

Introduction

Today, the most important source for the success of any organization is its human resources. Hence, organizations allocate significant resources to employ, develop and motivate valuable and talented people; and do not want skilled and talented people to leave at all (Ullah and Yasmin, 2013, p. 5). The concept of quality of work life was introduced for the first time in 1960s. The main application of quality of work life is for the employees and their work conditions. Quality of work life consists of the limit that members of the organization are able to meet their demands and needs through personal experience with the organization q2. The quality of work life implies the employees' satisfaction with work life. This concept is a mental phenomenon which is influenced by people's perceptions and emotions q9. Attention to the quality of work life creates favorable effects in the organization. Narehan et al. (2014) believed that attention to the quality of work life, creates jobs and desirable and pleasant working conditions for the employees. Also, the high quality of work life is crucial for the organizations to achieve high performance and growth in profitability.

On the other hand, organizations expect their employees to be more responsive and innovative and talk about organizational problems; but many employees state that their organizations do not support open communication and knowledge sharing. When a majority of employees prefer to remain silent about organizational issues, it will become a widespread behavior (Cinar et al, 2013, p. 314) that researchers such as Morrison and Millikan (2000), Van Dayn et al. (2003) and Vakola and Bouradas (2005) referred to as the organizational silence. Organizational silence is a global problem and not limited to a specific spectrum of countries (Samadi et al., 2013, p. 557). This organizational phenomenon is an inefficient process that wastes costs and organizational efforts and appears in different forms such as collective silence in the meetings, the low level of participation in organizational programs, a low level of public detrition, etc. Finding a solution to eliminate the silence of the employees will bring great value to managers and can provide the dynamics in organization (Rezabeygi and almasi, 2014, p. 300).

Employees of Education Organization are of high importance due to their role in making important decisions related to the most sensitive periods of teaching the country teenagers. These decisions will have great effects on sustainable development of the country in long term and cause the country's path to be affected towards the achievements of the goals of plan of the year 2025. Therefore, managers of Education Organization should provide means of organizational voice of their employees and provide such conditions that employees express their ideas frankly and do not indifferently ignore the organizational problems; so in this study, considering the quality of work life can influence organizational silence, researchers seek to answer the question whether there is a significant relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence.

Theoretical Background

Quality of Work Life

In the new millennium, the concept of quality of work life has become into one of the important organizational issues (Ooi et al, 2013, p. 74). This concept was first introduced in the 1960s (Al-Qutop and Harrim, 2011, p. 195). The quality of work life is a complex existence that is affected by and in interaction with many aspects of business and personal lives of the employees (Almalki et al, 2012, p. 2). Quality of work life is to create desirable working conditions by providing rewards, job security, career development opportunities and other cases will lead to support employees and increase their satisfaction (Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2013, p. 201). According to Dargahi and Yazdi (2007, p. 630) the quality of work life is a comprehensive program aimed at improving satisfaction, flexible learning in the workplace as well as helping the employees to manage changes well.

Quality of work life requires an organizational and structural atmosphere that is indeed to encourage, facilitate, strengthen, challenge and provide a way to improve existing procedures in the organization's operations (Sandhya Nair, 2013, p. 35).

Quality of work life sees the people in the organization as an asset. Through this approach, they are allowed to have an active participation in the management of their operations and make decisions. Therefore, satisfying the physiological needs as well as psychological and social needs, people will have more incentive (Varghese and C, 2013, p. 9). Consequently, employees' performance and satisfaction as well as the strengthening of workplace learning increase and performance and will ultimately create organizational effectiveness (Kanten, 2014 Widyastuti et al, 2013). Several researchers have studied the aspects of quality of work life. The most famous model of quality of work life was presented by Walton (1974). He introduced eight aspects for the quality of work life (Kanten, 2014; Mohammad Davoudi, 2014; Ahmadi et al., 2012). These aspects are:

- **Adequate and Fair Compensation:** Payment system in the organization is very important. The wages of employees in the organization must be paid at the right time (Chimoi, 2012, p. 13). Fair and adequate compensation is of high importance for its influence on motivation, attraction and retention of employees (kanten, 2014, p. 254). In this component, it considered whether the amount received for a certain job is on a par with the amount received for other jobs? (Faghih parvar et al., 2013, p. 136).
- **Safe and Healthy Workplace:** in the organization it should be noted that the employees should not encounter with the work conditions which are possible to harm them physically and mentally.
- **Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security:** Providing the way for improvement of personal abilities, opportunities for advancement, opportunities for application of acquired skills and security in the area of income and employment will have a great influence on employees' job satisfaction.

- Constitutionalism in the Work Organization: indicates the existence of laws that protect employees in the organization.
- Social Relevance of Work Life: This component of the quality of work life focuses on social accountability to maintain good quality of work conditions.
- Total Life Space: today, employees have a great desire to create a balance between work life and personal life. Establishing a balance between work and personal lives of employees in a competitive environment is very difficult (Faghih parvar et al., 2013, 137). Creating this balance has a significant influence on their job satisfaction (Kanten, 2014, p. 255).
- Social Integration in the Work Organization: This aspect of the quality of work life focuses on the fact that how the employees belong to the organization.
- Development of Human Capacities: This component of the quality of work life refers to providing an environment that allows the employees to achieve more learning opportunities and independence (Kanten, 2014, p. 254). Learning opportunities and identification of the ability have positive influence on job satisfaction and job stress reduction, which will lead to improvement of the quality of work life (Faghih parvar et al., 2013, p. 137).

Organizational Silence

Employees often have opinions, information and ideas to improve the organization. Sometimes they convey their opinions and ideas and some other times they prefer to remain silent (Cinar et al., 2013, p. 315). Organizational silence is to refrain from expressing any genuine suggestion about emotional, cognitive or behavioral assessments of conditions of the organization to someone who is able to compensate or change them (Wang and Hsieh, 2013, p. 786). Organizational silence is an important concept and is discussed in the topics of public administration (Karaca, 2013, p. 39). This organizational phenomenon is a sign of organizational disease and managers must identify and eliminate its major sources (Valikhani and Karpardaz, 2015, p. 3).

People show their silence in different ways in the organization; these not only include to be quiet and to remain silent, but would also include not to write, not to be present, not to be heard and to be neglected (Nikmaram et al., 2012, p. 1272). They also show their silence in other ways, such as low cooperation on issues such as knowledge sharing, collective brainstorming, identifying problems and possible solutions related to work and in severe cases setting out to create new problems and repeat them (Karaca, 2013, p. 40).

If we consider the silence on one side of continuum, the organizational voice is on the other side. Organization voice is the behavior based on the promotion that emphasizes creative challenges towards the improvement of organizational status and is less critical. Organizational voice emphasizes the recommendations to improve and change the procedures and generally improve

and change the organization in order to meet the standard, even if others oppose those recommendations (Mowbray et al., 2014, p. 2). Although useful for the organization, the organizational voice is often associated with some risk and cost for others (Hsiung, 2012, p. 350).

Van Dyne et al. (2003) have considered three aspects of acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and Pro-social silence.

- Acquiescent silence: is the first aspect of organizational silence where the employees of the organization refrain from expressing information, views and ideas about the issues facing the organization based on consent and submission (Yıldız, 2013, p. 32); so, this type of silence suggests a non-cooperative behavior which is inactive more. (Ehtiyar and Yanardag, 2008, p. 53). In this type of silence, employees have low awareness of their silence and have little desire to make a difference in the organization in front of their colleagues (Zehir and Erdogan, 2011, p. 1391).
- Defensive Silence: is the second aspect of organizational silence where the employees of the organization refrain from expressing information, views and ideas about the issues facing the organization based on fear and self-protective motivation (Knoll and Dick, 2013, p. 351). Unlike the acquiescent silence of which a person is less aware, in defensive silence, he consciously decides to remain silent (Whiteside and Barclay, 2011, p. 253).
- Pro-social Silence: according to Van Dyne et al. (2003), this kind of silence is based on organizational citizenship behavior. They defined pro-social silent as refusal of information, ideas and opinions with regard to the organization in order to benefit others or on the basis of altruism and cooperation in the organization (Lu and Xie., 2013, p. 48). Pro-social silence is not created because of any pressure or organizational training. By pro-social silence, the employees show great desire for cooperation and do not transfer private information of the organization to unfit people (Tan, 2014, p. 1193).

Review of literatures shows that these two variables have been examined very much alone, but there is little survey of the relationship between these two variables. For example, Chang and Lee (2006) showed that the majority of employees feel that good working relationships, job attraction and satisfaction and organizational commitment are of the most important issues for the quality of work life. Brinsfield (2009) in a study titled "The Silence of Employees: Aspects, the Development of Measures and Survey of Related Factors" found that there is a negative and significant relationship between organizational commitment and both acquiescent and defensive silence. Deniz et al (2013) through a study titled "The Relationship between the Silence of Employees and Organizational Commitment in Private Companies" found that there is a significant and inverse relationship between affective commitment and defensive silence. Mehrabi et al. (2013) in a study titled "the Survey of the Effect on the Quality of Work Life on the Reduction of Organizational Silence" found that there is a significant and positive relationship between all aspects of quality of work life and organizational silence. Nikaeen et al. (2014) in a study titled "Do Organizational Rumors Emphasize the Effect of Organizational Silence and Organizational Commitment", conducted among employees of Qom Municipality,

found that in both control and non-control of the rumors, there is a significant and negative relationship between organizational silence and organizational commitment. RezaVeissi Pour et al. (2015) in a study titled “Investigating the Relationship between Quality of Work Life and Organizational Silence” found that there is a significant and inverse relationship between the quality of work life and organizational silence. They also found that there is a negative significant relationship between defensive and acquiescent silence. While, there is a positive and significant relationship between pro-social silence and organizational silence.

Research Method

This study is an applied research, because the goal is to solve one certain problem. It is also strategically a quantitative research and is cross-survey in terms of aim. The statistical population of the research is the employees of Central Office of Fars Province Education Organization in the year 2014 containing about 460 people; therefore, according to Morgan Table, 210 questionnaires were distributed randomly among employees and only 180 of them were returned.

Instrument: data instrument and questionnaire were as follows: 1. Quality of Work Life Questionnaire: the questionnaire is designed according to Walton Questionnaire (Walton, 1974) and contains 29 items. The aspect of the questionnaire includes fair and adequate payment, safe and healthy workplace, opportunity for continued growth and security, constitutionalism in the work organization, social relevance of work life, total life space, social integration in the work organization, and development of human capacities. 2. Organizational Silence Questionnaire: to assess the employees' avoidance of expressing their opinions and concerns Van Dyne et al. questionnaire (2003) was used. The questionnaire included 15 items and aims to assess pro-social silence, defensive silence, and acquiescent silence. Content validity was used to examine the validity of the questionnaire. The opinions of professors and experts were used to confirm the fact that whether the designed items were appropriate to assess the considered hypotheses or not. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaires, they were randomly conducted among a sample of 30 people and its reliability coefficient, based on Cronbach's alpha, was respectively 0.87 and 0.79 for the quality of work life and organizational silence questionnaires which suggests that the used instrument was appropriate. In this study, 89% of the sample was male and 11% were female. The highest frequency of the respondents was in the age group of 40-50 years old (64%) and lowest frequency was in the age group of 30 years old and minus with the frequency of and 8.3 %. In terms of service records, the findings of the study showed that the lowest percentage (4.1) of the examined sample with less than 5 years of service as well as the highest percentage (64.3) of it had a record of over 20 years of service. In order to analyze the study hypotheses, partial least squares (PLS) modeling by using SMARTPLS software was used to analyze the data. PLS is a variance-based method which has fewer conditions compared with the same techniques of structural equations such as Lisrel and Amos. It also does not have volume limit and the selected sample can be equal or less than 30 (Gary and Terry, 2003, p. 416). It is also a powerful way when measuring items are limited and distribution of variables is uncertain (Hair et al., 1998,

p. 26). PLS uses multiple regression and for each sector of regression model, effect coefficient (R), significance number (t) and coefficient of determination (R²) are calculated.

Findings

The first hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence.

Figure 1 shows the first hypothesis test in the Bootstrapping state. The values shown on the arrows in Figure 1 are the t-value. If these values are between -1.96 and +1.96, the relationship is not significant and if they are out of this range, the relationship is significant at confidence level of 95%. Regarding that the t-value in Figure 1 for the relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence is less than -1.96 (equal to -17.237), there is a negative and significant relationship between these two variables.

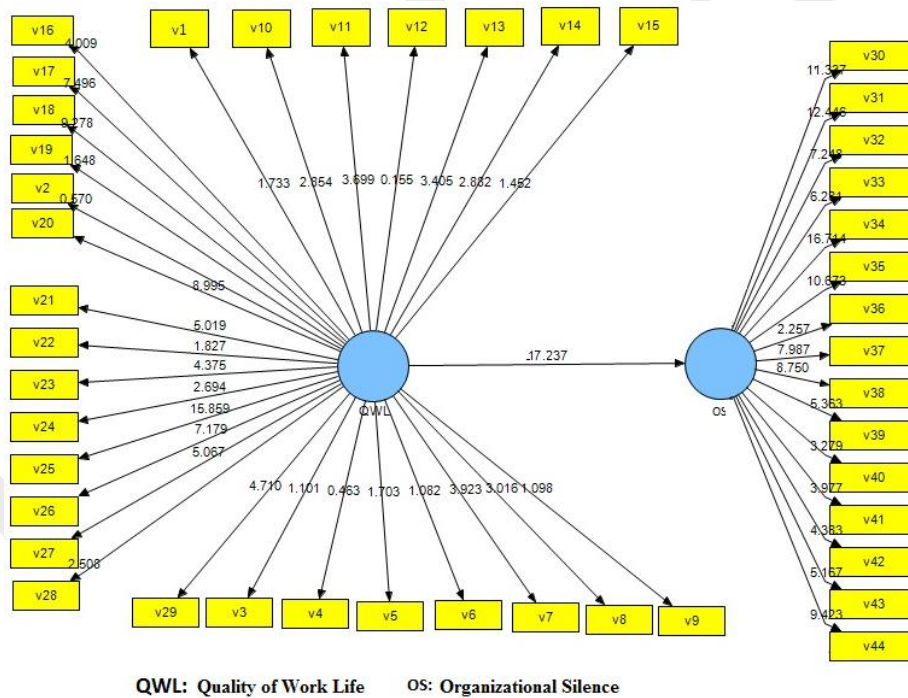


Figure 1: Output of PLS software in the Bootstrapping state

Figure 2 shows output of PLS software in PLS algorithm state, since the correlation coefficient for the first hypothesis is obtained -0.728, a strong negative correlation exists between the quality of work life and organizational silence. As a result, the first hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

Also regarding that the values obtained within the circle of organizational silence is 0.530, the quality of work life can explain 53% of the variance of the variable of organizational silence.

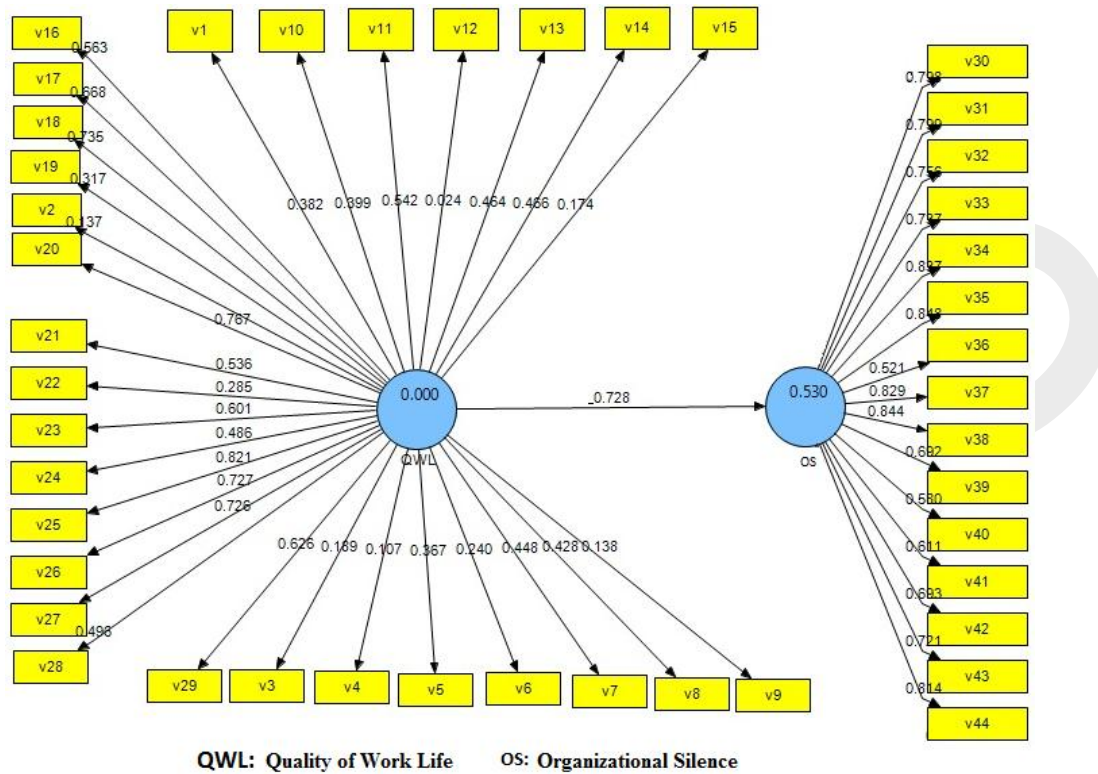


Figure 2: Output of PLS software in PLS algorithm state

The second hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between the quality of work life and the aspects of organizational silence.

Figure 3 shows output of PLS software for the second hypothesis in the Bootstrapping state. As can be seen, the t-value of the relationships between the quality of work life and defensive silent and acquiescent silence is less than -1.96 and it is between -1.96 and +1.96 for the pro-social silence. Therefore, according to the explanations stated, there is a negative and significant relationship between the quality of work life and both acquiescent silence and defensive silence.

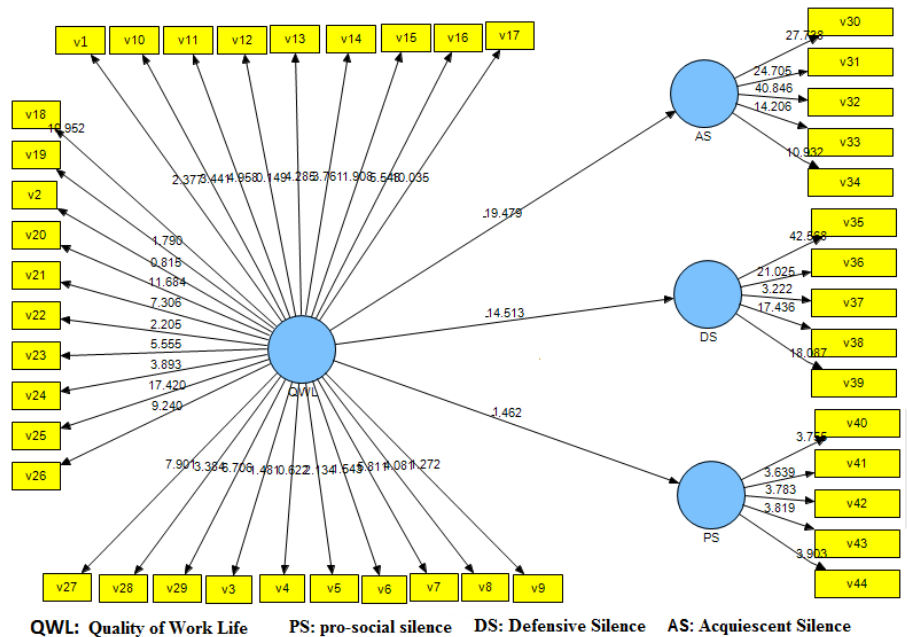


Figure 3: Output of PLS software in the Bootstrapping state for the second hypothesis

Also according to Figure 4 which shows output of the software in the PLS algorithm state, there is a negative and significant relationship between the quality of work life and acquiescent silence and defensive silence with correlation coefficients of -0.779 and -0.632. Therefore, the highest correlation is between the quality of work life and acquiescent silence i.e. -0.779 and the lowest coefficient is between the quality of work life and defensive silence i.e. -0.623 and there is no significant relationship between the quality of work life and pro-social silence.

According to Figure 4, quality of work life can explain 60.6% of acquiescent silence variable and 39.9% of defensive silence variable.

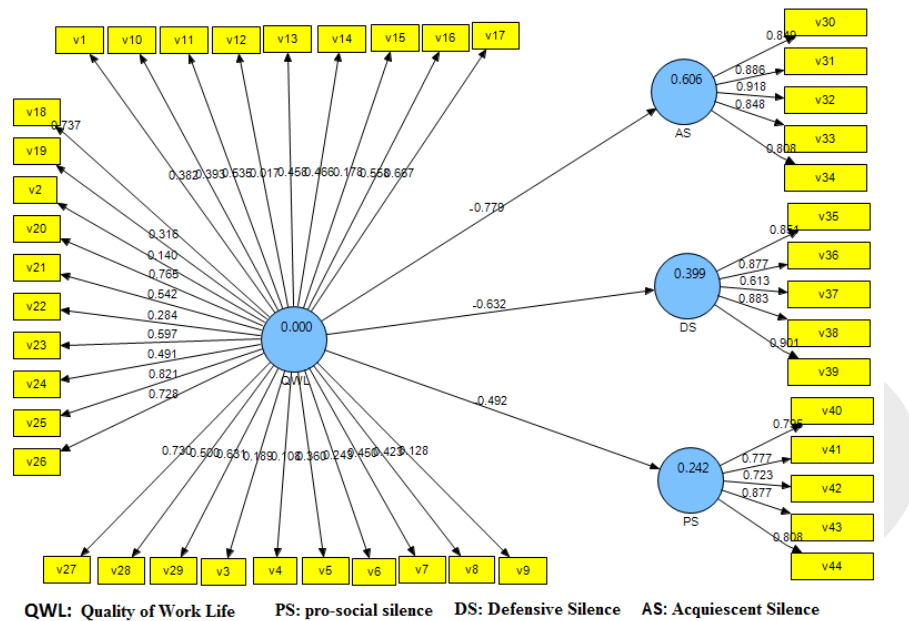


Figure 4: Output of PLS software in PLS algorithm state for hypothesis 2

In order to examine the effect of each component of quality of work life on the organizational silence, in PLS software, the aspects of quality of work life are considered as the independent variables and organizational silence as the dependent variable and relationships between them are measured.

The third hypothesis: there is significant relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence.

As in Figure 5, all aspect of the quality of work life, fair and adequate payment, development of human capacities, total life space, opportunity for continued growth and security, constitutionalism in the work organization, and safe and healthy workplace have a negative and significant relationship with organizational silence.

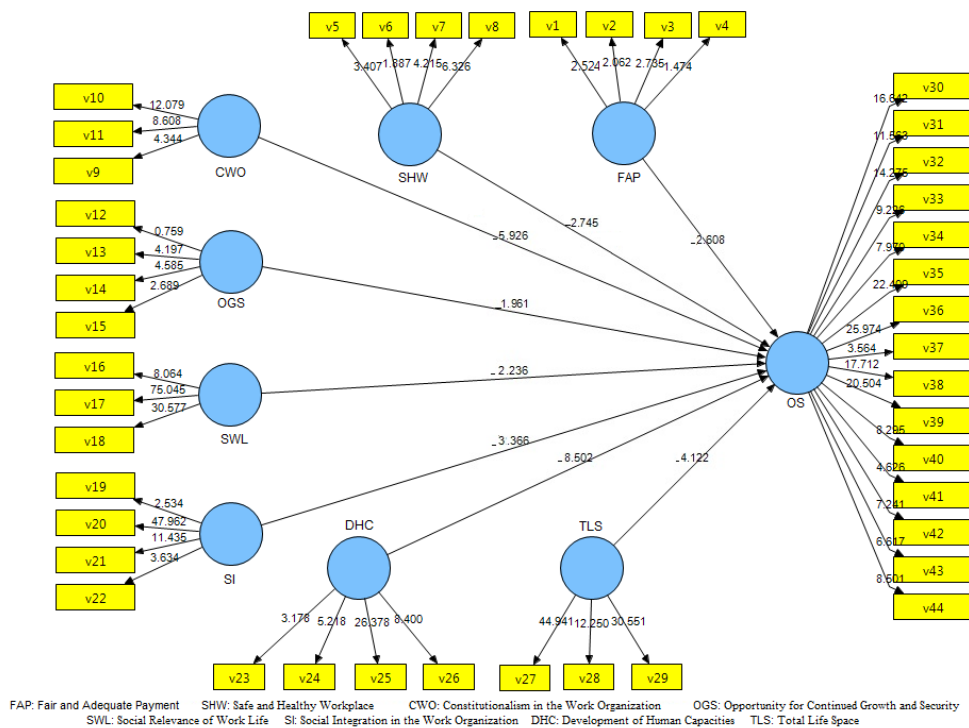


Figure 5: the relationship between the quality of work life and the organizational silence in the Bootstrapping state

Also according to Figure 6, from among the eight aspects influencing the organizational silence, in terms of effectiveness, the development of human capabilities with the coefficient -0.936, is in the first place and opportunity for continued growth and security with the coefficient of -0.198 is in the last place.

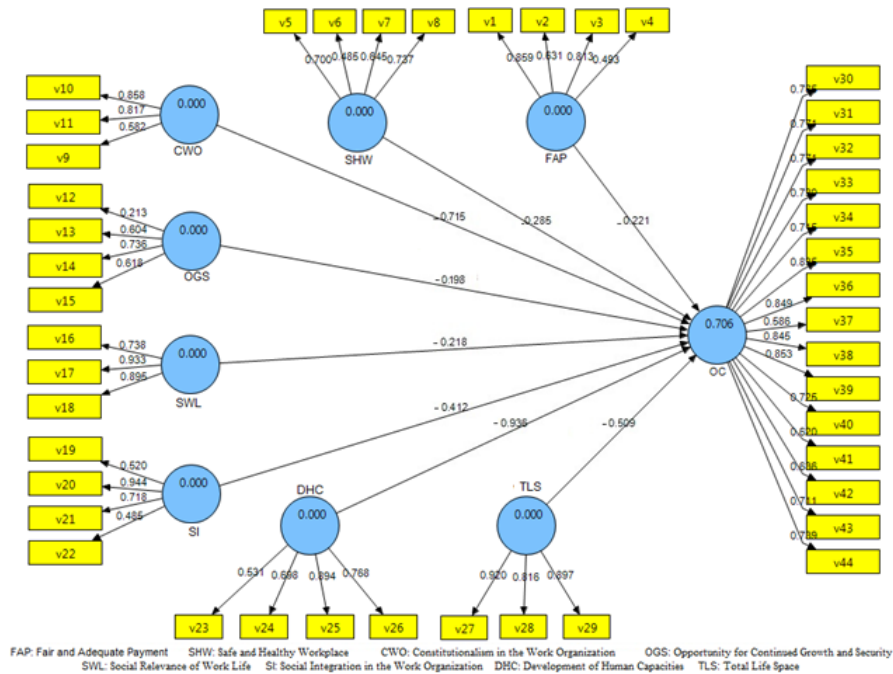


Figure 6: the relationship between the quality of work life and the organizational silence in the PLS Algorithm state

Discussion and Conclusion

Organizational silence is a common phenomenon in organizations and an existing reality and tangible for managers and employees. The important fact is that employees' different motivation lead to a special kind of silence and as a result they deliberately refuse to present their information, opinions, and ideas and create some kind of silence. Most researchers and scholars of management and organization have criticized the silence according to the various perceptions and events from their own perspective and pointed out its consequences. In this regard, researchers have proposed that what causes the silence in the organizations is subject to a process which is greatly influenced by a series of management and organizational variables. The results show that there is a negative and significant relationship between quality of work life and organizational silence. The study results are in conformity with the results of the study by Reza Veissi Pour et al. (2015); so that, by increasing the quality of work life the organizational silence reduces. The results of the second hypothesis suggest that there is a significant negative relationship between the quality of work life and defensive and acquiescence silence. Also, there is no significant relationship between quality of work life and pro-social silence. In the organizations with low quality of work life, people refrain from expressing their ideas, opinions, and comments to protect themselves and avoid organizational problems. Also, low quality of

work life in the organization leads to the increased acquiescence silence where the employees become isolated and obedient and refrain from expressing their ideas, opinions, and comments. The results of the third hypothesis suggest that there is a negative and significant relationship between all aspects of quality of work life and organizational silence. There is a negative and significant relationship between the workplace and total life space and organizational silence. Therefore, the organization can prevent the employees' silence by creating a healthy and secure environment and reasonable working hours. There is a negative relationship between fair and adequate payment and organizational silence. According to the Equity Theory, when employees feel there is inequality in the organization, they become indifferent and silent in regard with organizational issues. There is a negative and significant relationship between constitutionalism in the work organization and organizational silence. This means that freedom of speech without fear of official reaction and the domination of law over man ruling leads to the reduction of organizational silence. Reduction of opportunity for continued growth and security, lack of development of human capacities, and lack of integration, according to the results of the third hypothesis and lack of social relevance of work life lead to the increased organizational silence. This means that failure to provide improved individual abilities, development opportunities, opportunities to apply skills acquired, provide security of income and employment, employees' perceptions about social responsibility in the organization, lack of atmosphere of a sense of belonging to the organization, and also lack of benefit of employees of various skills and access to appropriate information about jobs lead to the employees' increased organizational silence and they will be indifferent to organizational problems. Regarding that organizational silence is a new issue in the field of management and organization, and especially in our country, fieldwork on it is rarely taken into account, it is necessary to conduct other studies with multiple samples.

According to the results the following proposals are put forward:

- To create a reward system based on performance
- To award employees in an official ceremony attended by all employees
- To provide the conditions for people to express opinions without fear of managers
- To set up some rules in support of the employees
- To increase the enthusiasm and desire of managers to take employees' ideas
- To provide workshops and training programs to enhance the skills and abilities of the employees
- To improve working conditions of health and safety

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