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**The cascading role of leader-induced defensive cognitions
and citizenship pressures in navigating employee silence**

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The cascading role of leader-induced defensive cognitions and citizenship pressures in navigating employee silence

Abstract

Purpose - The study aims to attain insights into the impact of destructive leadership and citizenship pressures in inducing employee silence through the lens of social exchange and the conservation of resources theory. The research further relies on Friedkin's attitude-behaviour linkage framework (2010), while taking into account the role of employees' defensive cognitive evaluations, as against the previously accented emotion-focused explanations.

Design/methodology/approach - In order to corroborate the pertinence and contextual relevance of the framework, a survey-based study was conducted with a purposively selected sample of 133 full-time employees from the systemically important banks. The sample size was determined through an a-priori power analysis using G*Power, and the hypothesized serial mediation model was tested using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS v 4.0.

Findings - The findings accentuate the significance of destructive leadership in navigating employees' silence directly and serially through continuance commitment and compulsory citizenship behaviours. The study also underlines that rather than being portrayed as unidimensional outcomes centered on attitudes, employee behaviours ought to be considered contingent retorts under attitude-behaviour cascades.

Originality/value - The study contributes to strategic human resource management literature by offering a cognition based explanation for employees' silence, taking Pakistan's cultural and contextual orientation into cognizance. Extending on the attitude-behaviour linkage framework, the study provides that attitudes shaped by defensive cognitive evaluations may concurrently foster involuntary (citizenship) as well as voluntary (silence) behaviours.

Keywords Destructive leadership, Employee silence, Continuance commitment, Serial mediation, Attitude-behaviour cascades, Compulsory citizenship behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Literature indicates destructive leadership to be costly, bearing implications for crucial workplace outcomes essential for organizational functioning (Mackey *et al.*, 2021). Despite the growing acknowledgment of negative leadership's deleterious impact on organizational effectiveness (Osei *et al.*, 2022), destructive leadership and its implications for individuals' behavioural outcomes in the workplace remain relatively unexplored in the Asian context (Nauman *et al.*, 2020). The overarching term 'destructive leadership' encompasses a range of negative leader behaviours such as workplace bullying, abusive supervision, narcissistic leadership, despotic leadership, toxic leadership, and bad leadership etc. (Shaw *et al.*, 2011; Thoroughgood *et al.*, 2018). Einarsen *et al.* (2007) classified destructive leadership as "the systematic and repeated behaviour by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization..." (p. 208). The study operationalizes destructive leadership from a culturally nuanced perspective accented by Lu *et al.* (2012), who described the concept based on four dimensions i.e., corruption, abuse of subordinates, excoriation of subordinates and loss of professional morality.

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The impact of destructive leadership reverberates far beyond the individual leader-follower dynamics, often driving employees to engage in counterproductive work behaviours that undermine organizational success, erode competitive positioning, and affect employees' personal standing (De Clercq *et al.*, 2021; Liang *et al.*, 2021). Prediction and comprehension of such behaviours thus become fundamental objectives in contemporary applied psychological research (Runge *et al.*, 2020). However, explicit counterproductive work behaviours are typically easier to identify in contrast to implicit ones (Xu *et al.*, 2015), making them predominantly devastating (He *et al.*, 2018).

In this study, we focus on employee silence - a pervasive implicit counterproductive work behaviour frequently adopted as a coping strategy by employees (Pandey *et al.*, 2021). Literature indicates employee silence to be on the rise, with as many as 85% of employees refraining from expressing their views on organizational matters (Hassan *et al.*, 2019). It transpires when employees withhold or conceal ideas, opinions, or information concerning their work or organization (Duan *et al.*, 2017). Sabino *et al.* (2019) classified silence as individuals' fifth response grounded on Farrell's EVLN model (1983). It is a notable mechanism by which employees in power-distant and collectivistic societies avoid unfavourable performance evaluations by leaders (De Clercq *et al.*, 2020).

Employee silence is purported to significantly impair an organizations' ability to identify or foresee problems and learn from mistakes (Mousa *et al.*, 2020; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005), by obstructing the free flow of information (Jawahar *et al.*, 2023). This entails serious ramifications, for decision makers at upper echelons essentially require information and constructive feedback. Corporate tragedies, for instance, the collapse of Worldcom and Enron have demonstrated employee silence to be particularly detrimental to organizations (Xu *et al.*, 2015). Dyne *et al.* (2003), through their seminal conceptual framework, identified three types of silence: acquiescent silence based on resignation, defensive silence based on fear, and prosocial silence based on cooperation. Defensive silence, the most pervasive form of silence (Shaukat & Khurshid, 2022), adversely affects organizational functioning since employees may resort to such a strategy to protect themselves when faced with challenges such as fear of job loss, uncertainty about leadership, or loss of situational control (Song *et al.*, 2017).

We also focus on the way leaders distribute resources, and assign responsibilities (Schmid *et al.*, 2018), with leaders often compelling employees to undertake tasks beyond their job descriptions - compulsory citizenship behaviour (Shaheen *et al.*, 2019). For instance, a manager may ask employees to work late on a project, assist co-workers with their work, or interrupt an employee's vacation to have him finalize a presentation (Bolino *et al.*, 2013). Such behaviours, exhibited under duress, induce stress, precipitating the onset of negative employee behaviours (He *et al.*, 2018; Loi *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Recent evidence suggests that compulsory citizenship behaviours are based on cognitive calculations to cope with enforced work demands, with such behaviours being more common in eastern cultures (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Yildiz *et al.*, 2023). We argue that compulsory citizenship behaviours compel employees to navigate their torment through implicit means, to cope with the inflicted psychological distress.

This study therefore investigates employees' proclivity to remain silent in response to destructive leadership and citizenship pressures. In so doing, we endeavour to contribute to a

deeper understanding of the interplay of defensive cognitions in navigating employees' silence as a cognitive coping strategy, considering the research call by [Jawahar et al. \(2023\)](#).

[Hattab et al. \(2022\)](#) argue that the influence of destructive leadership on employee outcomes varies across cultures. By drawing on a quantitatively designed survey-based study, recruiting a sample of 133 full-time employees, we further argue that the broader cultural context sways employees' propensity to remain silent when confronted with workplace stressors – destructive leadership and citizenship pressures. [In Pakistan, where cultural norms emphasize accepting power inequalities and complying with superiors' directives \(Nauman et al., 2020\)](#), employees are often compelled to retaliate against their leaders through implicit means ([Osei et al., 2022](#)). This phenomenon is especially conspicuous in such societies where collective harmony and respect for leaders are revered ([Hofstede et al., 2010](#); [Narayanan & Moon, 2022](#)). Individuals' employability and job market conditions too have a bearing on employees' manner of coping, which may compel a disgruntled employee to silently deal with a destructive leader ([Pandey et al., 2021](#)). Such dynamics accentuate the pertinence of continuance commitment.

Continuance commitment – a distinct facet of organizational commitment, reminiscent of defensive cognitions ([Jain et al., 2009](#)), refers to “commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization” ([Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1](#)). It can be construed as employees' psychological assessment, encompassing considerations of accumulated resources and perceived low mobility, principally governing their behavioural responses ([Olfat et al., 2020](#)). Employees with a continuance commitment dominant profile are therefore more susceptible to the adverse effects of workplace stressors ([Vandenberghe et al., 2011](#)), for they possess a greater inclination to perceive strain and psychological resource loss fostering defensive behaviours ([Islam et al., 2023](#)).

Acknowledging the fundamental roles of emotions and cognitions in driving individuals' decisions to speak up or remain silent ([Lee & Allen, 2002](#); [Morrison, 2011](#); [Wu et al., 2022](#)), we take note of the limited diversity in exploring employees' coping strategies in response to destructive leadership ([Gupta et al., 2020](#)). For that matter, we focus on the less-explored cognitive aspects in contrast to the predominant emotion-centric explanations, see for example ([Pandey et al., 2021](#); [Shaukat & Khurshid, 2022](#)), thereby advancing a perspective that considers employee silence to be a defensive measure of coping, based on consciously driven cognitive evaluations. [The authors contend that employees are unlikely to engage in direct retaliation against destructive leaders owing to continuance commitment. Instead, they comply with their superiors' directives, irrespective of whether the assigned tasks are contractually ascribed or not. To cope with the cognitive burdens imposed by destructive leaders and citizenship pressures, employees then adjust their performance downwards and respond implicitly with silence.](#)

Theoretical background and hypotheses

The study draws on social exchange theory ([Blau, 1964](#)) as the overarching framework, complemented by the conservation of resources theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)), for attaining a nuanced understanding into the role of destructive leadership and citizenship pressures in navigating employee silence. [The social exchange theory holds that individuals' behaviours are premised on the principle of reciprocity \(Gouldner, 1960\).](#) As regards a key assumption of the theory,

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3 exchange relationships can only be elaborated through social exchange theory if, a situation of
4 interdependence exists (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) – a condition fulfilled by employment
5 contracts. According to Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2016), social exchange theory denotes a
6 subjective cost and benefit analysis, influencing individuals' decisions on reciprocation.
7 Cropanzano *et al.* (2017) argue social exchange process to be dependent on an initiating action,
8 which can be positive or negative, where positive initiating actions, such as organizational
9 support and justice, can transform an economic exchange into a social one, while negative
10 actions, like destructive leadership, may restrict it to an economic exchange. Leadership and
11 ensuing employee behaviours can thus be viewed as economic or social exchanges between
12 leaders and subordinates, contingent on the nature of their relationship (Cropanzano *et al.*,
13 2017). Employees may engage in favourable behaviours to repay and endorse leaders' actions
14 (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) however, negative leader behaviours may entail employee
15 retaliation (Wu *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, employees do not always explicitly retaliate against
16 their leaders, rather reciprocate with silence, explanation for which can be envisaged under the
17 conservation of resources theory.

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19 The central tenet of the conservation of resources theory is that “individuals strive to
20 retain, protect, and build resources” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516) such as time, energy, social support,
21 and relationships. Humans primarily pursue creation of situations with resource surpluses while
22 avoiding resource depleting situations, for the loss of valuable resources causes stress or
23 psychological discomfort (Hobfoll, 2001). Consequently, individuals attempt to avoid stress
24 inducing factors (Cole *et al.*, 2010; Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993). However, when confronted with
25 stressors, they are motivated to preserve their resources and protect themselves from further
26 resource depletion by investing remaining resources in defensive and passive behaviours
27 (Hobfoll, 2011). Hobfoll *et al.* (2018) argued that employees exposed to resource-depleting
28 circumstances in their organizations tend to “enter a defensive mode to preserve the self that is
29 often aggressive and may become irrational” (p. 104). In an organizational context, leaders
30 often exploit employees (Huang *et al.*, 2023), and even assign responsibilities outside the scope
31 of their laid down job descriptions, which causes psychological pressure and induces stress
32 (Zheng *et al.*, 2020). The psychological distress, coupled with fear of retaliation and
33 competitive pressures, places a cognitive burden on employees, pushing them into silent
34 resentment. Employees are thus compelled to conserve their residual resources and
35 employment through covert behaviours as a coping strategy (Nauman *et al.*, 2020).

36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 *Destructive leadership and employee silence*

48 Leaders play the most salient role in defining the work environment to which employees are
49 exposed (Ju *et al.*, 2019). Literature denotes ‘dark leadership’ as a set of self-centred attitudes,
50 motivations, and behaviours that functions as a work stressor and has serious repercussions for
51 organizations (Jabbar *et al.*, 2020). Importantly, work stressors are assumed to directly affect
52 employees' defensive cognitions (Ashforth & Lee, 1990), while leader's abusive behaviours
53 deplete employees' psychological resources (Osei *et al.*, 2022). Silence is primarily utilized as
54 a measure of self-defence when employees fear antagonistic responses from their superiors
55 (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Employees exposed to resource-draining abusive supervision in
56 power-distant and collectivistic countries, therefore, refrain from reporting leaders and choose
57 to remain silent with an aim to preserve organizational harmony and avoid negative
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3 performance ratings ([De Clercq et al., 2020](#)). We can thus reasonably postulate that destructive
4 leadership has a direct bearing on employee silence.

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6 *H1. Destructive leadership positively influences employee silence.*

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8 *Destructive leadership and continuance commitment*

9 Bad leaders often exhibit behaviours that instigate mistrust, reduce employee commitment and
10 loyalty by inducing job stress, and hamper employees' tendency to achieve optimal
11 organizational performance ([Naseer et al., 2016](#)). In this vein, leadership behaviour has
12 consistently emerged as a pivotal determinant of employee commitment ([Al-Hussami et al.,
13 2018](#)). According to [Osei et al. \(2022\)](#), leaders' destructive behaviours act as negative stressors
14 which consume employees' physical and cognitive resources, and are purported to be
15 disruptive of bank employees' commitment ([Jabbar et al., 2020](#)). We propose that upon
16 encountering destructive leaders, employees' sense of belonging and obligation towards their
17 organization wane, whereas apprehensions of perceived costs start taking precedence in their
18 work patterns and attitudinal responses.

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22 *H2. Destructive leadership positively influences continuance commitment.*

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24 *Destructive leadership and compulsory citizenship behaviour*

25 Employees are often subjected to managerial pressure to go the extra mile and execute tasks
26 not forming part of their job descriptions ([Bolino et al., 2004](#)). Inferring from this, citizenship
27 behaviours were bifurcated into compulsory and non-compulsory by [Vigoda-Gadot \(2006\)](#),
28 while defining compulsory citizenship behaviours as employees' involuntary behaviours
29 driven by social or management pressures. Rather than reflecting spontaneous choices,
30 contemporary perspective on citizenship behaviours emphasizes a cognitive orientation,
31 wherein employees are viewed as engaging in deliberate cognitive assessments regarding
32 perceived workplace pressures and managerial interventions ([Chen et al., 2021](#)). Leaders'
33 coercive power and social pressure prompt employees to exhibit citizenship behaviours as a
34 mode of defence, with such behaviours being detrimental to employee and organizational
35 performance in essence ([Lin & Chi, 2022](#); [Zhao et al., 2013](#)). We therefore speculate that
36 destructive leadership has a direct influence on the manifestation of compulsory citizenship
37 behaviour.

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42 *H3. Destructive leadership positively influences compulsory citizenship behaviour.*

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44 *Continuance commitment and employee silence*

45 Evidence indicates that a significant proportion of employees tend to refrain from voicing their
46 concerns or negative events in the workplace ([Hassan et al., 2019](#)). This reluctance to speak up
47 is rooted in the perception that the associated costs of doing so outweigh the advantages ([Al-
48 Hawari et al., 2020](#)). Employees thus feel insecure when asked to share ideas and express
49 opinions under the impression that their recommendations or comments may challenge the
50 status quo. This feeling of insecurity leads to a conscious or subconscious decision to stay silent
51 ([Deniz et al., 2013](#)). ([Deniz et al.](#)) further noted that employees' commitment to their
52 organization can either yield a positive or negative effect on their choice of remaining silent or
53 speaking up, depending on the particular type of commitment. We, therefore, predict that
54 continuance commitment, evocative of insecurity, compels employees to remain silent.

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60 *H4. Continuance commitment positively influences employee silence.*

Continuance commitment and compulsory citizenship behaviour

[Alkan and Turgut \(2015\)](#) asserted that employees may engage in citizenship behaviours because of poor economic conditions or fear of uncertainties. This engagement may be driven by a strategic intent to distinguish themselves from peers in consideration of their job security ([Youn et al., 2017](#)). Instead of retaliating and standing up to unfair demands, employees prefer to maintain a fairly compliant demeanour. This also allows them to ensure continuity of their economic exchange relationship. Employees, for example, participate in citizenship behaviours for the purpose of demonstrating that they are worth retaining ([Bolino et al., 2013](#)). We thus speculate that continuance commitment holds a direct influence on the manifestation of compulsory citizenship behaviour.

H5. Continuance commitment positively influences compulsory citizenship behaviour.

Compulsory citizenship behaviour and employee silence

Employees compelled to take part in extra-role activities either because of organizational constraints, or colleagues' incompetence, or their supervisors' directives, feel frustrated owing to the consumption of additional resources ([Spector & Fox, 2010](#)). This form of citizenship behaviours serve as a direct incentive to engage in, and even make employees feel justified to reciprocate with counterproductive work behaviours to conserve their residual resources ([Yam et al., 2017](#); [Zhao et al., 2014](#)). Scholars maintain that compulsory citizenship behaviour may lead to deterioration of employees' psychological resources ([Peng & Zhao, 2012](#)), precipitating the onset of negative dispositions, fostering adverse behaviours ([Bolino et al., 2009](#)). [He et al. \(2018\)](#) posited that the question therefore becomes, which sort of adverse behaviours would be exhibited by employees? while further speculating that silence may be considered uncontentious and relatively safer in contrast to explicit counterproductive work behaviours.

H6. Compulsory citizenship behaviour positively influences employee silence.

Destructive leadership, continuance commitment, compulsory citizenship behaviour and employee silence

Literature suggests negative leadership to be on the rise, contributing to employees' psychological distress and workplace deviance ([Lopez et al., 2020](#)). Victims of destructive leadership are more likely to adopt passive or avoidant responses rather than aggressive ones, especially since the perpetrators hold a higher position ([Schyns & Schilling, 2013](#)). This is because employees generally hold a negative predisposition towards voicing their opinions in cognizance of the risks associated with challenging the status quo or their superiors' authority and being dubbed as saboteurs ([He et al., 2017](#)). Specifically, in Asian cultures, employees are expected to stay submissive and ensure absolute compliance to the directives of their superiors without exception ([Nauman et al., 2020](#)). These implied expectations take the form of pressures, and eventually such pressures, augmented by the opportunity costs of leaving the organization, tacitly coerce employees into citizenship behaviours ([Wu et al., 2018](#)). However, these seemingly involuntary behaviours exhibited under compulsion exacerbate the cognitive burden on employees, leading to further depletion of their psychological resources, fostering silence as a measure of low-profile retaliation ([Yam et al., 2017](#)).

In this backdrop, diverging from the classical understanding, and considering behavioural responses to be contingent retorts instead of unidimensional outcomes centered on attitudes, can accord a more comprehensive scope to attitude-behaviour linkages. [Friedkin \(2010\)](#) suggested that an “attitude-behaviour linkage may rest simply on attitude strength, the stronger the attitude, the more reliable its manifestation in particular behaviours. Strong attitudes may have reliable behavioural manifestations in both planned and unplanned behaviours” (p. 211). Drawing upon the attitude-behaviour linkage framework in coherence with the conservation of resources theory, we propose that employees exposed to stressful – resource depleting conditions induced by destructive leaders undergo a consistent evaluation of their economic exchange relationship, with citizenship behaviours exhibited under constraint serving as involuntary (unplanned) behavioural outcomes, while eventually eliciting silence, as a volitional (planned) behavioural outcome. This defensive coping mechanism allows employees to deal with the cognitive burdens imposed by destructive leaders and citizenship pressures without being noticed, while preserving their residual resources and economic exchange relationships ([De Clercq et al., 2020](#)).

H7. Continuance commitment and compulsory citizenship behaviour serially mediate the relationship between destructive leadership and employee silence.

Conceptual framework

Figure 1. Conceptual framework
“PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE”

Source(s): Created by authors

Equations for the model

The equations for testing the serial mediation model in line with [Lemardelet and Caron \(2022\)](#) are:

$$\begin{aligned}
 CC &= \alpha_{01} + \alpha_1(DL) + \varepsilon \\
 CCB &= \alpha_{02} + \alpha_2(DL) + b_2(CC) + \varepsilon \\
 ES &= \beta_0 + d(DL) + c_1(CC) + c_2(CCB) + \varepsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

Methodology

Population

In order to ascertain the pertinence of the proposed model, focused brainstorming sessions were followed by surveys conducted with employees working in the six Systemically Important Banks ([Hanif et al., 2019](#)). Financial institutions are characterised as systemically important if “their distress or disorderly failure would cause significant disruption to the financial system and economic activity due to their size, complexity and systemic interconnectedness” ([Brühl, 2017, p. 107](#)).

Participants

The participants for the study encompassed 133 full-time employees from the systemically important banks functioning in the country. We conducted an a-priori power analysis with a random-predictors model through G*Power v_3.1 for determining a rational sample size with adequate statistical power ([Faul et al., 2009](#)). ‘Power’ was calculated for a medium effect size

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3 for one-tailed multiple regression analyses ($p^2 = .13$), with three predictors, a target power of
4 .95, and a significance level of .05. The power analysis yielded a minimum recommended
5 sample size of 124 participants, with the critical R^2 value being .062 (Faul *et al.*, 2009). For
6 enhanced generalizability, the respondents for the study were selected purposively with their
7 minimum profile being assistant managers.
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10 Measures

11 For operationalizing qualitative concepts, a mix of self-reported and measures reported by
12 others were utilized to avoid confirmation biases and common method variances (Jordan &
13 Troth, 2019), and the research instrument was anchored on a five (5) point Likert scale.

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15 *Employee silence* was measured by adopting the 5-item scale by Dyne *et al.* (2003).
16 Sample items include “I chose to remain silent when I had concerns about my work” and
17 “Although I had ideas for improving work, I did not speak up”.
18

19
20 *Destructive leadership* was assessed through the 20-item scale by Lu *et al.* (2012).
21 Sample items include “My superior abuses his power for personal gain”, “My superior is overly
22 demanding on subordinates regardless of the actual situation”, “My superior discriminates
23 among subordinates” and “My superior engages in cronyism”.
24

25 For operationalizing *continuance commitment*, we adopted 8 items from the
26 organizational commitment scale by Allen and Meyer (1990). Sample items include “I feel that
27 I have too few options to consider leaving this organization” and “It would be very hard for me
28 to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to”.
29

30
31 *Compulsory citizenship behaviour* was assessed through the 5-item scale by Vigoda-
32 Gadot (2007). Sample items include “There is social pressure in this organization to work extra
33 hours, beyond the formal workload and without any formal rewards” and “I feel that I am
34 forced to help other employees beyond my formal obligations and even when I am short on
35 time or energy”.
36

37 Data collection and common method biases

38 In order to mitigate same-rater bias, data was collected through successive self-administered
39 questionnaire surveys in two intervals from May, 2023 to September, 2023 (Podsakoff *et al.*,
40 2012). Data on destructive leadership and continuance commitment was collected at Time-1,
41 whereas data on compulsory citizenship behaviour and employee silence was collected at
42 Time-2 with a lag of three months. In order to attenuate the threat of respondent attrition, we
43 distributed 200 questionnaires in sealed envelopes in liaison with the human resource
44 departments of the banks. Respondent attrition resulted in 67 questionnaires being discarded
45 (29 at T-1 & 38 at T-2), and analysis was carried out on a dataset containing 133 observations.
46 The last four (4) digits of the respondents’ mobile numbers were utilized as matching codes for
47 tracking responses.
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50 Ethical Considerations

51 The respondents’ participation was voluntary, and no private boundaries were breached while
52 soliciting the requisite data. The purpose of the study was elaborated through an instruction
53 sheet beforehand (conspicuously mentioning contact details in case any clarity was required by
54 the respondents), with the assurance that their responses will be kept confidential.
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Results

Descriptive and correlation analysis

The measures of location and spread – mean, standard deviation, and skewness confirmed that the data ranges were acceptable. The descriptive and correlation coefficients are presented at *Table I*.

Table I. Descriptive and correlation coefficients

“PLEASE INSERT TABLE I HERE”

Note(s): $N = 133$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; M , mean; SD , standard deviation; SK , skewness; KT , kurtosis; GEN, gender; AG, age; TEN, tenure; ES, employee silence; DL, destructive leadership; CC, continuance commitment; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour

Source(s): Created by authors

Control variables

Considering the literary consensus that gender, age, and tenure of employment influence employees' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours ([Pandey et al., 2021](#)), we controlled for the said demographic characteristics during hypotheses testing.

Assessment of measurement model

The assessment of the measurement model involved the use of PLS-SEM in SmartPLS v_4.0. Initially, individual indicator reliability for the reflective indicators was corroborated, whereby outer loadings $> .70$ were sought after ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). The final fitted model as presented at *Figure 2* reflected adequate loadings for all the indicators with the exception of one item of continuance commitment i.e., CC4®, and thus the item was dropped. The internal consistency reliability of the utilized instruments concurrently verified through Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability measure yielded above par values, with ' α ' and CR values $> .7$ ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). Likewise, the AVE measure indicated sufficient evidence for convergent validity with AVE values for all constructs being $> .5$ ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). The HTMT ratios accorded sufficient evidence as to the measures being discriminant with ratios below the threshold of .85 ([Henseler et al., 2015](#)).

Table II. Reliability and validity statistics

“PLEASE INSERT TABLE II HERE”

Note(s): $N = 133$. α , Cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; HTMT, Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio; CC, continuance commitment; DL, destructive leadership; ES, employee silence; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour

Source(s): Created by authors

Assessment of structural model

We tested the structural model through the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 samples, and adhered to the standard criteria for acceptance or rejection of hypotheses, including coefficient of determination (R^2), the student's t -test and significance tests ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). The hypothesized model's R^2 value of .646 was significantly material considering the critical R^2 value of .062 extracted through power analysis. The inner VIF values afforded confidence as

to the measures not being too closely associated. The results reflected that destructive leadership positively influences employee silence at 95% CI (β .319, $STDEV$.087, t 3.667, $LLCI$.168, $ULCI$.454), continuance commitment (β .543, $STDEV$.075, t 7.251, $LLCI$.421, $ULCI$.666), and compulsory citizenship behaviour (β .620, $STDEV$.066, t 9.353, $LLCI$.501, $ULCI$.719) in line with H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 respectively. The results further reflected that, continuance commitment positively influences employee silence (β .128, $STDEV$.058, t 2.199, $LLCI$.035, $ULCI$.225), and compulsory citizenship behaviour (β .177, $STDEV$.072, t 2.472, $LLCI$.070, $ULCI$.305), thus confirming H_4 and H_5 . The analysis also supported H_6 - compulsory citizenship behaviour positively influences employee silence (β .406, $STDEV$.065, t 6.254, $LLCI$.297, $ULCI$.509).

The serial mediation effect as per H_7 was supported by the statistically significant results as well, since the lower and the upper limit confidence intervals did not include a zero (β .039, $STDEV$.020, t 1.954, $LLCI$.013, $ULCI$.078), albeit the low effect size. The summary of hypotheses' results is presented at *Table III*.

Table III. Hypotheses' results

“PLEASE INSERT TABLE III HERE”

Note(s): $N = 133$. DL, destructive leadership; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour; CC, continuance commitment; ES, employee silence

Source(s): Created by authors

The results, specifically the direct paths as per H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 reveal destructive leadership to be of crucial significance in inducing defensive attitudes and behaviours among financial sector employees. Concurrently, H_4 , H_5 , and H_6 highlight the detrimental effects of continuance commitment and compulsory citizenship behaviours. While the direct paths exhibited significant findings, indicating the influential role of destructive leadership, the analysis also accorded reasonable grounds as to the pertinence of defensive cognitions in navigating employees' silence serially. Our proposition that employee behaviours ought to be considered contingent retorts under attitude-behaviour cascades is ratified as well – attitudes based on defensive cognitive evaluations may concurrently foster involuntary (compulsory citizenship) as well as voluntary (silence) behaviours. This underscores the complex interplay between attitudes and behaviours, emphasizing the need for organizations to address underlying cognitive processes to effectively manage employee responses.

The direct relationships and serial mediation were established as hypothesized, however, the specific indirect effects, though not forming part of the primary scope of the study, reflected intriguing results (*Ref: Table IV*) i.e., $DL \rightarrow CCB \rightarrow ES$ depicted significant intervening effect of compulsory citizenship behaviour in the relationship between destructive leadership and employee silence at 95% CI (β .252, $STDEV$.052, t 4.864, $LLCI$.168, $ULCI$.337). The mediation of continuance commitment amidst destructive leadership and employee silence was also statistically significant i.e., $DL \rightarrow CC \rightarrow ES$ - (β .070, $STDEV$.034, t 2.041, $LLCI$.019, $ULCI$.129). Likewise, the mediated path $DL \rightarrow CC \rightarrow CCB$ confirmed the mediation of continuance commitment in the relationship between destructive leadership and compulsory citizenship behaviour - (β .096, $STDEV$.047, t 2.051, $LLCI$.034, $ULCI$.187).

The analysis primarily accentuates the role of destructive leadership in eliciting defensive attitudes, enforcing extra-role demands, and inducing silence behaviours among employees. This implies that organizations can significantly reduce the onset of employee silence by mitigating destructive leadership behaviours. Nevertheless, the pertinence of defensive cognitions in conditioning employees' behavioural responses cannot be overlooked, for the specific indirect paths confirmed the intervening effect of continuance commitment and enforced citizenship behaviours.

Table IV. Specific indirect effects

“PLEASE INSERT TABLE IV HERE”

Note(s): $N = 133$. DL, destructive leadership; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour; CC, continuance commitment; ES, employee silence

Source(s): Created by authors

Discussion

The results confirmed the prevalence of destructive leadership, compulsory citizenship behaviours and employee silence in the systemically important financial institutions of Pakistan. Our research not only sheds light on these critical workplace phenomena but also responds to Jawahar *et al.*'s (2023) research call by postulating a cognition based framework for explaining the relationship between destructive leadership and employee silence. The findings correspond in principle to Knoll *et al.* (2019) who argued that power distance fosters employee silence by encouraging conformity, passive acceptance of the status quo, and a propensity to avoid conflicts.

The study implies that employees encountered with destructive leaders feel compelled to exhibit citizenship behaviours for preserving their resources and position rather than direct retaliation or switching over owing to continuance commitment, concurrently adjusting their performance downwards while reciprocating with silence. This serves as a passive stress coping strategy to deal with the cognitive burdens imposed by destructive leaders and citizenship pressures. The framework is analogous to Zheng *et al.* (2020), who noted that employees facing depleted personal resources in having to put up with destructive leaders adopt the safest recourse available due to a perceived threat of adverse work outcomes.

Consistent with the theoretical principles of social exchange (Blau, 1964) and the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), our research offers a nuanced explanation for the relationship between work stressors and employee behaviours. We postulate that on a broader level, leadership and ensuing employee behaviours can be perceived as either an economic or a social exchange between leaders and followers, depending on the nature of their relationship. The causal mechanisms underlying the impact of destructive leadership can be explicated as a defensive and passive coping strategy (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). In response to the cognitive burdens imposed by destructive leaders, employees invest additional time and effort to navigate through challenges, aiming to conserve their outstretched resources. Consequently, they capitulate to citizenship behaviours while remaining silent to alleviate the experienced stress and psychological discomfort without being noticed (Pradhan *et al.*, 2019). The theoretical framework is somewhat complementary to the proposition by Liang *et al.* (2022)

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3 rooted in the affective events theory - workplace deviance transpires when employees are
4 forced to perform extra-role for protecting their leaders' interests.

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6 Our study further underscores the significance of comprehending employees' cognitive
7 coping strategies for deciphering their behavioural responses to deal with stressors in the
8 workplace. This is crucial because employees constitute an organization's initial line of defence
9 against inefficiencies, potential accidents, and other crises. Correspondingly, [Jawahar et al.](#)
10 [\(2023\)](#) sensitized that when employees perceive lack of support from leaders or that their
11 concerns and needs remain unaddressed, they are likely to protect themselves from further
12 resource depletion. This defensive mechanism may involve withholding feedback, even if such
13 feedback could improve organizational effectiveness and avert potential crises.

14 15 16 17 *Theoretical contributions*

18 The study contributes to the Strategic Human Resource Management literature by identifying
19 a novel causal mechanism through a serial mediation model. Our model, centred on attitude-
20 behaviour cascades, caters to the country's unique cultural and contextual orientation. This has
21 prospects for better comprehension of employees' indulgence in silence behaviours in power-
22 distant and collectivist cultures where defensive cognitions tend to assume a significant role in
23 modelling employees' work patterns and behavioural responses ([Islam et al., 2023](#)).

24 Our emphasis on defensive cognitions fills in a void by highlighting employees'
25 cognitive evaluations bridging work stressors and counterproductive work behaviours in that,
26 exposure to stressors such as destructive leadership triggers defensive attitudes in employees,
27 making them capitulate to citizenship demands, eventually pushing them into silence. This
28 study, therefore, adds diversity to the discourse on employees' coping strategies to deal with
29 negative leader behaviours ([Gupta et al., 2020](#)).

30 In doing so, we promulgate a more rational and empirically warranted explanation for
31 employees' silence when confronted with destructive leaders. This departure holds significance
32 for not only highlighting the role of defensive cognitions in shaping employee behaviours but
33 also for theorizing workplace behaviours to be influenced by employees' deliberate and
34 calculated decisions rather than spontaneous choices, as purported under the prevailing
35 emotion-centric delineations e.g., ([Ahmad & Begum, 2020](#); [He et al., 2017](#); [Pandey et al.,](#)
36 [2021](#); [Syed et al., 2022](#); [Yildiz et al., 2023](#)).

37 Even more so, converging involuntary (citizenship) and voluntary (silence) behaviours
38 under the attitude-behaviour cascades, the study implies that behavioural responses ought to be
39 considered contingent retorts rather than standalone outcomes centred on attitudes, an aspect
40 which has been neglected in research thus far. We suggest that attitudes framed by exposure to
41 adversity or aptly put, attitudes based on defensive cognitions may concurrently yield certain
42 involuntary and voluntary behaviours. These behaviours may serve conflicting purposes -
43 favourable to one end while being detrimental to the other ([Friedkin, 2010](#)).

44 45 46 47 *Practical implications*

48 From a managerial perspective, our study offers some actionable insights for creating a healthy
49 and productive work environment in collectivist and power-distant cultures. Firstly, our
50 research underscores the critical role of leadership in shaping employee responses.
51 Organizations should therefore prioritize leadership development programs, motivational
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3 seminars, and best practices workshops ([Huang et al., 2023](#)). This may significantly deter
4 implicit negative behaviors such as silence by curtailing the trigger of defensive attitudes in
5 employees. Our proposition holds relevance, for employee silence deprives decision makers of
6 adequate information when situations arise ([Jawahar et al., 2023](#)).
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9 Further, to eliminate negativity in the work environment, organizations need to
10 prioritize the accountability of individuals who exhibit destructive behaviours. For that matter,
11 developing and enforcing a code of conduct, conspicuously specifying acceptable and
12 unacceptable behaviours at the workplace is essential. Stress management programs can
13 certainly come in handy for promoting favourable and constructive workplace interactions
14 ([Huang et al., 2020](#)).
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17 Organizations also need to revisit their performance evaluation metrics on recurring
18 basis. Implementing robust evaluation processes including 360-degree feedback, reverse
19 appraisals, and measures to protect whistle blowers, is essential for creating a conducive
20 environment fostering transparency, and accountability while mitigating adverse behaviours.
21 By creating avenues for honest feedback and addressing concerns promptly through effective
22 grievance redressal systems, organizations can nurture a culture of fairness. Managers and
23 employees need to be imparted recurrent conflict resolution trainings to communicate and
24 identify mutually beneficial solutions in challenging situations ([Shaukat & Khurshid, 2022](#)).
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27 Promotion of an open organizational culture and structural changes can further
28 contribute to mitigating implicit adverse behaviours among employees ([Deniz et al., 2013](#)). In
29 this aspect, an analogy from the corporate world can be drawn from Jack Welch, the CEO of
30 GE, who, through his ([2013](#)) book “Winning”, put forth the concept of ‘candor’, which
31 emphasizes the promotion of a culture of expression where employees can openly express and
32 share their ideas and viewpoints.
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34 35 *Limitations*

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37 Despite undertaking certain procedural remedies to mitigate potential biases ([Podsakoff et al.,](#)
38 [2012](#)), including the use of different measurement occasions, elaboration of the purpose of the
39 study through an instruction sheet beforehand, and utilizing well established measures for
40 operationalizing qualitative concepts ([Jordan & Troth, 2019](#)), the use of observational data
41 constrains the inference of causality under the study, causal relationships may therefore be
42 interpreted with caution. Additionally, though a mix of self-reported and measures reported by
43 others were utilized, a significant challenge was the trade-off between confirmation and same-
44 rater biases. [Kristof-Brown et al. \(2016\)](#) maintain that in order for citizenship behaviours’
45 research to be relevant, it needs to incorporate reporting of such behaviours by others,
46 specifically immediate managers/supervisors. In our defence however, a self-reported measure
47 was utilized for operationalizing compulsory citizenship behaviours, since management
48 usually holds absolute authority over deciding what is extra-role, and what constitutes the
49 employees’ formal responsibility. In contrast, the measure for destructive leadership was
50 reported by others, for objectivity could have been compromised in an event of relying upon a
51 self-reported measure. In this backdrop, [Schyns and Schilling \(2013\)](#) maintain that “as is the
52 case with constructive leadership, destructive leadership tends to be assessed from the
53 followers’ point of view” ([p. 140](#)). The referred limitations therefore accentuate the use of
54 carefully designed experiments by future researchers for a more robust research design.
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Future research directions

The proposed framework detailing the underlying mechanisms governing the influence of destructive leadership on employees' silence can be validated for different cultural contexts.

The model can further be validated while taking other implicit counterproductive work behaviours as outcomes. Moreover, researchers can employ a different theoretical perspective such as the social identity theory for eliciting an identity based explanation for employees' indulgence in silence. For instance, the role of group identity and its influence on individuals' actions can be considered. Furthermore, the overarching influence of individuals' personality traits on their tendency to adopt active or passive coping strategies could also be explored under the five-factor model. More importantly, the phenomena can be tested on a comparative scale in both the public and private sector financial institutions. In conclusion, future research in this domain has the potential to further enrich our comprehension of the complex interplay between stressors and adverse employee behaviours.

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Figure 2. The final fitted model
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Management Research Review

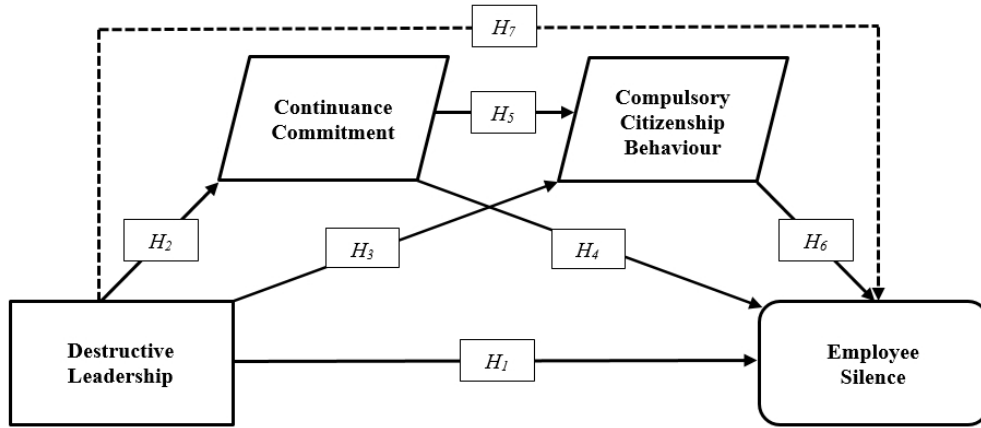


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

408x178mm (57 x 57 DPI)

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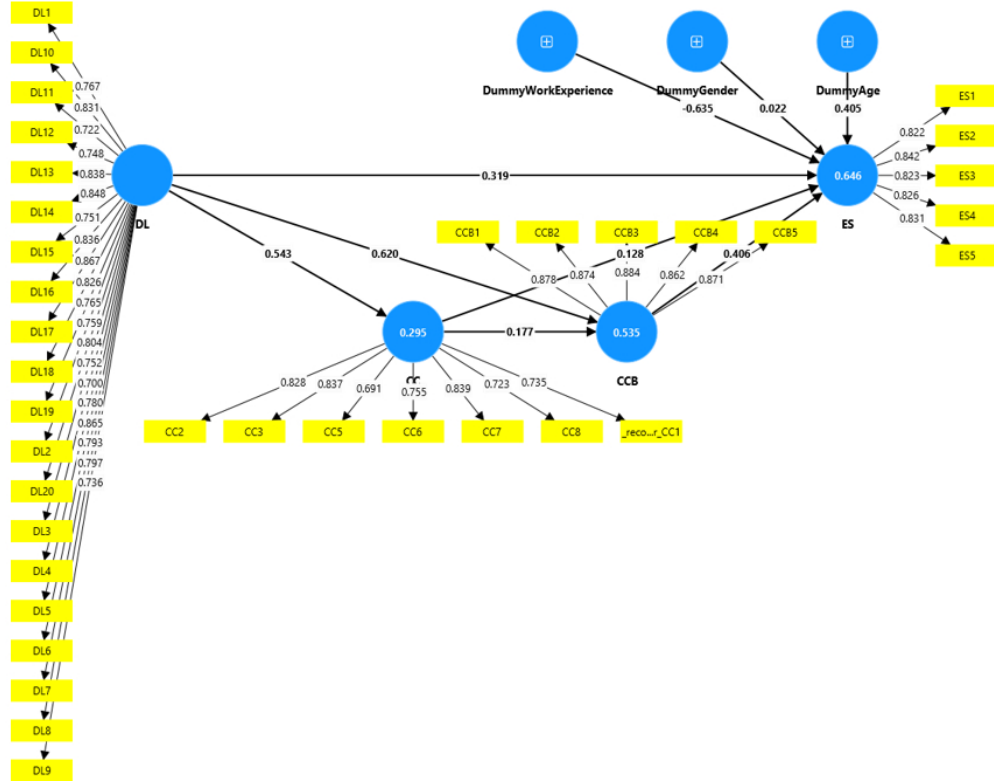


Figure 2. The final fitted model

381x298mm (57 x 57 DPI)

Table I. Descriptive and correlation coefficients

| Concept | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SK</i> | <i>KT</i> | GEN | AG | TEN | ES | DL | CC | CCB |
|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| GEN | .20 | .40 | 1.4 | .23 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| AG | 2.48 | 1.2 | .93 | .76 | -.07 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TEN | 2.52 | 1.1 | .59 | .61 | -.11 | .93** | - | - | - | - | - |
| ES | 3.03 | .94 | .07 | -.89 | -.06 | -.22** | -.25** | - | - | - | - |
| DL | 2.87 | .87 | .22 | -.72 | -.11 | -.23** | -.27** | .71** | - | - | - |
| CC | 3.61 | .83 | .04 | -1.0 | -.18* | -.24** | -.24** | .51** | .55** | - | - |
| CCB | 3.03 | .94 | -.17 | -.59 | -.07 | -.16* | -.15* | .74** | .69** | .47** | - |

Note(s): $N = 133$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *M*, mean; *SD*, standard deviation; *SK*, skewness; *KT*, kurtosis; GEN, gender; AG, age; TEN, tenure; ES, employee silence; DL, destructive leadership; CC, continuance commitment; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour

Source(s): Created by authors

Table II. Reliability and validity statistics

| Concept | α | CR | AVE | ES | DL | CC | CCB |
|---------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|
| ES | .886 | .888 | .687 | – | – | – | – |
| DL | .968 | .969 | .625 | .771 | – | – | – |
| CC | .887 | .888 | .600 | .616 | .579 | – | – |
| CCB | .922 | .923 | .763 | .806 | .753 | .565 | – |

Note(s): $N = 133$. α , Cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; HTMT, Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio; CC, continuance commitment; DL, destructive leadership; ES, employee silence; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour

Source(s): Created by authors

Table III. Hypotheses' results

| <i>Path</i> | β | <i>STDEV</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>5.0%</i> | <i>95.0%</i> | <i>VIF</i> |
|--|---------|--------------|----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| <i>H</i> ₁ DL → ES | .319 | .087 | 3.667 | .168 | .454 | 2.333 |
| <i>H</i> ₂ DL → CC | .543 | .075 | 7.251 | .421 | .666 | 1.000 |
| <i>H</i> ₃ DL → CCB | .620 | .066 | 9.353 | .501 | .719 | 1.418 |
| <i>H</i> ₄ CC → ES | .128 | .058 | 2.199 | .035 | .225 | 1.547 |
| <i>H</i> ₅ CC → CCB | .177 | .072 | 2.472 | .070 | .305 | 1.418 |
| <i>H</i> ₆ CCB → ES | .406 | .065 | 6.254 | .297 | .509 | 2.154 |
| <i>H</i> ₇ DL → CC → CCB → ES | .039 | .020 | 1.954 | .013 | .078 | - |

Note(s): *N* = 133. DL, destructive leadership; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour; CC, continuance commitment; ES, employee silence

Source(s): Created by authors

Table IV. Specific indirect effects

| <i>Path</i> | β | <i>STDEV</i> | <i>t</i> | 5.0% | 95.0% |
|---------------|---------|--------------|----------|------|-------|
| DL → CCB → ES | .252 | .052 | 4.864 | .168 | .337 |
| DL → CC → ES | .070 | .034 | 2.041 | .019 | .129 |
| DL → CC → CCB | .096 | .047 | 2.051 | .034 | .187 |

Note(s): $N = 133$. DL, destructive leadership; CCB, compulsory citizenship behaviour; CC, continuance commitment; ES, employee silence

Source(s): Created by authors

‘Reviewer Feedback and Response’

The cascading role of leader-induced defensive cognitions and citizenship pressures in navigating employee silence

The authors would like to express gratitude to the reviewers for their compassionate consideration of the submitted revision and their valuable guidance. The reviewers’ comments have been thoroughly deliberated, and sincere efforts have been made to incorporate further improvements. The entire research paper has been reviewed, with a specific focus on strengthening the introduction and literature review sections. Moreover, control variables have now been accounted for in the analysis, whereas presentation of methodology and results sections (highlighted in yellow) has also been enhanced to align with contemporary standards in published articles. The revised research paper alongside the responses to the reviewers’ observations is respectfully submitted for consideration.

Compliance Details (Reviewer 1)

| S # | Reviewer’s Suggestions & Observations | Author’s Actions / Response | Compliance Ref: / Page # |
|------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 | A strong focus is placed on Pakistan. It is a fact that the study has been conducted in Pakistan, but do the authors have reason to expect that the relationships observed in Pakistan would not be observed in more individualistic countries? I feel that mentioning very often the country where the study was conducted might deter researchers from other countries from reading their study. | <p>The reviewer’s kind observation is acknowledged with the submission that Pakistan’s cultural orientation characterizing power-distance and collectivism has been emphasized in an effort to establish the pertinence and contextual relevance of the framework.</p> <p>Though the authors cannot definitively suggest that the relationships would not be observed in more individualistic countries, the study does however suggest the identified causal mechanism to be particularly pertinent in power-distant and collectivist cultural settings. In this backdrop, the authors have proposed a future research direction that <i>“the proposed framework detailing the underlying mechanisms governing the influence of destructive leadership on employees’ silence can be validated for different</i></p> | - |

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| | | <p><i>cultural contexts</i>". The same is highlighted in green for kind consideration.</p> <p>The authors have further attempted to mitigate overemphasis on Pakistan in the revised manuscript. For that matter, appropriate revisions have been incorporated which enhance the study's applicability beyond its specific geographical context.</p> | |
| 2 | <p>I still find it difficult to understand why continuance commitment has been considered an antecedent of (and measured earlier than) employee silence and compulsory citizenship behaviors. This could be explained or emphasized in the introduction.</p> | <p>The reviewer's kind observation is acknowledged with the submission that the research paper incorporates an attitude-behaviour perspective, where continuance commitment is positioned as a defensive attitude triggered by the stressful impact of destructive leadership. This attitude subsequently leads to compulsory citizenship behaviour and employee silence. In effect, the study proposes that continuance commitment serves as the underlying mechanism explaining how destructive leadership influences employees' engagement in compulsory citizenship behaviours, which then result in silence. While the authors endeavoured to articulate this narrative in the last paragraph of the introduction section, the same has been rearticulated with an intent to emphasize the contribution of continuance commitment in the overall cascading effect.</p> | <p>Introduction section</p> <p>Last paragraph highlighted in 'green'</p> |

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| 3 | <p>I think more details could be provided concerning all the constructs measured in the study, more details on each of them, and data on their harmful effects on organizations.</p> | <p>In response to the reviewer's valuable feedback, the authors have attempted to incorporate further improvements. The incorporations are highlighted in introduction and methodology sections in the revised manuscript.</p> | - |
| 4 | <p>In terms of hypotheses, I would suggest changing the order by placing the current H2 as H1 (to follow the conceptual model's logic) and removing H6 because it adds nothing, conceptually speaking.</p> | <p>The reviewer's kind observation is acknowledged with gratitude. However, the authors find themselves constrained to shuffle the order of hypotheses H2 and H1, as this would disrupt the logical flow and coherence of H3 to H6.</p> <p>Considering the reviewer's kind suggestion, the authors revisited relevant literature on serial mediation e.g., (Lam & Zhou, 2020), which typically begins with hypothesizing the impact of predictor variable on the outcome variable. Consequently, the current order reflects this established approach and ensures alignment with existing research conventions.</p> <p>Moreover, while the reviewer's insightful comments and kind suggestions have significantly contributed to enhancing the manuscript, the authors believe that removal of H6 could compromise the model's completeness and overall conceptual integrity. Therefore, the authors respectfully request the esteemed reviewer to reconsider this suggestion.</p> | - |

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| 5 | The two main conceptual frameworks should be expanded and better explained | In line with the reviewer's kind suggestion, the theoretical framework has been expanded by incorporating additional literature on the social exchange and the conservation of resources theory. | - |
| 6 | The abstract (and even title) does contain concepts that are too broad or not identifiable (defensive cognitions, emotion-centric, involuntary behaviors, voluntary behaviors) | Considering the reviewer's kind observation, the abstract has been revised, with specific emphasis on the identified concepts. The term 'defensive cognitions' now explicitly refers to 'defensive cognitive evaluations' - employees' mental processes influenced by a defensive frame of mind, whereas the term 'emotion-centric' has been clarified to denote explanations focused on emotions. The authors have now attempted to incorporate more reader friendly terms to describe the said concepts, while also explicitly defining 'voluntary behaviours' (employee silence) and 'involuntary behaviours' (compulsory citizenship behaviour) in parentheses for clarity. The authors do however wish to keep the title intact, for the concept 'defensive cognitions' has been clarified further in the abstract. | Abstract |
| 7 | Why is defensive silence the most potent? What is the evidence to support this assertion? | In line with the reviewer's kind observation, the assertion has been rearticulated while referring to the relevant source, in an attempt to substantiate the said assertion casting a more rational impression. The revised manuscript now reads "defensive silence, the most pervasive form of silence (Shaukat & Khurshid, 2022)...". | Page # 2 Highlighted in 'green' |

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| 8 | <p>P.12 (discussion): The study's results do not back up the first sentence of the discussion. The study does not compare Pakistan to any other country so how it is possible to state that what is observed in the study is an issue?</p> | <p>The authors respectfully submit that the first sentence of the discussion provides that “<i>the study unveils destructive leadership, compulsory citizenship behaviours and employee silence as pervasive issues in the systemically important financial institutions of Pakistan</i>”. The sentence, supported by the statistically significant results, implies that destructive leadership, compulsory citizenship behaviours and employee silence indeed exist within the study’s context, thus representing serious challenges.</p> <p>Considering the reviewer’s comment, the sentence has been rephrased in order to bring in further clarity and avoid any potential misinterpretation by readers.</p> | <p>Discussion section</p> <p>First sentence highlighted in ‘green’</p> |
| 9 | <p>P.13-14. The word "work stressor" is used a few times but it is never measured in the current study. I would suggest then to remove it or to explain how the variables used in the study relate to work stress</p> | <p>In response to the reviewer’s kind observation, the authors respectfully submit that a ‘work stressor’ is any aspect of a job or work environment that causes psychological strain or tension in employees, which can negatively impact their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance. The authors further acknowledge that while ‘work stressor’ itself is not a variable measured in this study, the term is used to contextualize the impact of destructive leadership and compulsory citizenship behaviours, which are widely recognized in the literature as sources of workplace stress.</p> | - |

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| | | <p>The authors therefore believe it is important to retain the term ‘work stressor’ to accurately convey the stress-inducing nature of destructive leadership and compulsory citizenship behaviours as discussed in the manuscript. Accurate sources for these concepts have been cited throughout the manuscript to support their classification as workplace stressors.</p> | |
| 10 | <p>P.13. In the theoretical implications, the authors mention the existence of a novel mechanism but never explicitly mention it</p> | <p>It is respectfully submitted that by ‘novel causal mechanism’, the authors actually refer to the serial mediation model hypothesized and tested in the study. This model proposes a sequence where destructive leadership influences employees’ continuance commitment, which in turn affects their engagement in compulsory citizenship behaviours and subsequently leads to silence. For that matter, and considering the study’s results, the authors proceed to say that “<i>the study contributes to the Strategic Human Resource Management literature by identifying a novel causal mechanism through a serial mediation model</i>”.</p> | - |

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'Reviewer Feedback and Response'

The cascading role of leader-induced defensive cognitions and citizenship pressures in navigating employee silence

The authors would like to express gratitude to the reviewers for their compassionate consideration of the submitted revision and their valuable guidance. The reviewers' comments have been thoroughly deliberated, and sincere efforts have been made to incorporate further improvements. The entire research paper has been reviewed, with a specific focus on strengthening the introduction and literature review sections. Moreover, control variables have now been accounted for in the analysis, whereas presentation of methodology and results sections (highlighted in yellow) has also been enhanced to align with contemporary standards in published articles. The revised research paper alongside the responses to the reviewers' observations is respectfully submitted for consideration.

Compliance Details (Reviewer 2)

The authors are grateful to the reviewer for the accorded guidance and for endorsing the incorporated changes. The reviewer's insightful comments and kind remarks have significantly contributed to the improvement of the paper and have been a motivational factor for the authors. Thankyou!

The authors also conducted the 'Harman's single-factor test' post-hoc, which confirmed that the items did not load on a single factor. Additionally, the authors have incorporated further improvements to the research paper based on other reviewers' guidance.