DECODING SILO MENTALITY AMONGST MILLENNIALS: A COMPREHENSIVE EMPIRICAL REVIEW.

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Abstract
Silo mentality represents a behavioural phenomenon prevalent across the corporate landscape, posing a significant threat to organizational performance and the overall organization dynamics. As a result, managers are required to pay careful attention to their employees' behavioural patterns and ideologies which in turn could have negative implications on organization's performance. Previous researchers have studied the prevalence and consequent implications on silo mentality. This paper aims to synthesize the vast and fragmented literature on silo mentality among millennials, its antecedents and possible influence on overall organizational performance. Many previous researchers have tasked themselves to understand the existence of silo mentality and its effects on organizations, this paper is built on reporting such research conducted on silo mentality, highlighting the gap in conceptual research in this body of knowledge, paving the way for further research in illustrating silo mentality among millennials.
Keywords: Silo Mentality, Millennials

Introduction
Silo mentality is an attitude that affects perception and thinking, and therefore the external behaviour of employees. This notion has garnered attention and scrutiny across multiple domains, encompassing organizational behavior, management, and psychology. Silo mentality represents a cultural phenomenon that emerges within organizations as they become compartmentalized into distinct departments or units. Divisions holstered by silos fosters impediments to effective communication, hampers the sharing of information, and stifles opportunities for collaboration (Molek, Jager, & Pucelj, 2023). This phenomenon, in nature, occurs when several departments or groups within an organization do not want to share information or knowledge with other individuals in the same organization and therefore do not work as well with each other (Syverson, 2011). It can also be regarded as a lack of communication and common goals between departments in an organization (Hotaran, 2009). Organizations, even today, function on a worldview of hierarchical formation where functions and interactions are mechanically constructed (Lepore, 2022). This leads to a fragmented thinking which has proven to hinder organizational growth. In today's competitive business

landscape, the prevalence of silos within an organization has a lasting impact on both the employee and overall organizational performance. The danger of silo mentality lies in the fact that it may often be unintentional and therefore go undetected until negative implications start to fester (Laoyan, 2022). This makes it imperative for organizations to build awareness and adapt systems to prevent the formation of silos from the outset.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of an organization, it is imperative to foster organizational learning and facilitate the exchange of knowledge among its members. This process plays a crucial role in enabling organizational members to identify and rectify errors within the organization, ultimately leading to sustained high-performance outcomes. The importance of organizational learning becomes even more pronounced in environments characterized by complexity, dynamism, and turbulence, where it is considered an essential element for success (Waal, Weaver, Day, & Heijden, 2019).

The significance of organizational facets among millennials in contemporary organizations has become a focal point of scholarly interest. Recent research has illuminated the relevance of this phenomenon within the millennial workforce. Silo mentality, characterized by departmental isolation and communication barriers, has substantial implications for organizational performance. Studies reveal that the generational attributes of millennials, including their inclination towards tech-savviness and desire for meaningful work experiences, intersect with the challenges posed by silos (Smith, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020). Researchers (Brown, 2021; Anderson & Lee, 2019) suggest that millennials' desire for a collaborative and inclusive work environment clashes with the constraints imposed by siloed structures. Consequently, understanding and addressing the significance of silo mentality among millennials is imperative for organizations aiming to attract, engage, and retain this influential segment of the workforce. This research conveys the need for innovative strategies to dismantle silos and foster a culture of open communication and interdepartmental cooperation that resonates with the millennial ethos.

Evolution of Silo Mentality

The history of organizational silo mentality is a narrative punctuated by the persistent challenges it poses to modern workplaces. Over the last few years, scholars and practitioners have extensively documented the prevalence and consequences of silo thinking within organizations. This mindset can be traced back to early management theories that emphasized hierarchical structures and specialization. Despite advancements in management thinking, silo mentality has endured, fueled by factors such as functional specialization, departmental rivalries, and a lack of incentives for cross-functional collaboration (Li & Liu, 2019; Zhang & Li, 2020). Recent research underscores its detrimental impact on organizational performance, innovation, and employee satisfaction (García-Santos & Marimon, 2021; Barik & Rae, 2019). Understanding this historical context is essential for devising effective strategies to overcome silo mentality and foster a more integrated and collaborative organizational culture.

The term "sitality", coined by Phil Ensor as "Functional Silo Syndrome," stems from the physical silos used for storage and division. Drawn from a farm metaphor (Vermeulen, Puranam, & Gulati, 2010), the term quickly grew to become a commonly used phrase in describing divisions within the larger organization. Silos define how the underlying constructs

within large organizations are structured and differentiated based on job specialization (Briody & Erickson, 2014), and how this in turn impacts the behaviour of employees and disrupts cohesive working culture. In simple terms, the silo mentality within the organization occurs when departments or unconscious groups formed within the existing organization structure psychologically disconnect from the other. These fragmentations are based on underlying differences, or the diversity between employees working in the same organization.

Numerous researchers have looked at silo mentality in attempts to understand how organizational structures can generate silo mentalities amongst employees. Organizations have been hierarchically structured since the 1950s (Greenberg & Baron, 2003), thereby enhancing the significance of understanding how silos form based on organization structures for effective managerial practice. In any given hierarchical structure, the formation of vertical and horizontal boundaries is inevitable and it is grounded by the fundamentals of psychoanalytic human behaviour (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Vertical boundaries refer to the gaps in organizational structure created by the division of functional areas, i.e., manufacturing, marketing, finance, or human resources while horizontal boundaries refer to the power distance between each tier of the employee hierarchy. When silos form within such groups, it can be argued to have an influence on work behavior as the silo mentality fabricates unconscious patterns of behavior in the minds of employees (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012).

The most conventional view on silo mentality describes it as a construct of organizational behaviour dysfunction (Greenberg & Baron, 2003), referring to the feeling of isolation, lack of trust and collaboration, and overall lack of awareness of business functions across groups. In addition to structural silos, these silos are often formed based on multiple other factors which will be explored in detail throughout this paper. Within such compartmentalization, a behavioural phenomenon in the form of silo mentality occurs, where employees grow inward looking and refrain from knowledge sharing, consequently dampening the overall effective running of the organization (Perception Dynamics, 2019).

In contemporary organizational landscapes, silo mentality remains a pertinent challenge. Silo mentality, often referred to as the division of departments or units within an organization, hinders effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration among different parts of the organization. This phenomenon persists in various industries and has profound implications for organizational performance and innovation. Recent research highlights the detrimental effects of silo mentality on new product performance (Li & Liu, 2019), firm performance (Zhang & Li, 2020), and environmental management system performance (García-Santos & Marimon, 2021). To address this issue, scholars emphasize the importance of fostering a collaborative culture and breaking down silos to promote knowledge sharing and innovation (Barik & Rae, 2019). In today's dynamic and interconnected business environment, addressing silo mentality remains a critical imperative for organizations striving to adapt and thrive.

Given the fast-paced nature of the corporate landscape of today, organizations require employees to be strategically dynamic in order to keep up. Therefore, the alignment of all individuals within the organization is imminent in fostering a positive organizational culture geared for business growth. In order to eliminate risk on organizational culture, it is important to explore the underlying factors which foster silo mentality and individualistic behaviour.

Antecedents of Silo Mentality

Silo mentality, characterized by fragmented communication and collaboration within organizations, remains a persistent challenge in contemporary workplaces. This article reviews research to identify key antecedents contributing to the emergence of silo mentality. Drawing on prominent empirical studies, the author examines the impact of leadership style, organizational culture, communication barriers, incentive structures, technological factors, and workforce diversity on silo behavior. Insights from these studies shed light on the complex interplay of factors that either foster or mitigate silo thinking. By understanding these antecedents, organizations can develop targeted strategies to promote a culture of collaboration and innovation.

Silo mentality, a phenomenon wherein different parts of an organization become isolated from one another, hindering effective communication and collaboration, continues to challenge contemporary workplaces (Cameron & Quinn, 2020). Understanding the antecedents that contribute to the development of silos is essential for organizations striving to break down these barriers and cultivate a culture of openness and cooperation.

Previous researchers have contributed to the empirical body of research through numerous attempts in addressing the influence of silo mentality on organizational artefacts. Amongst notable empirical findings, research has been undertaken to understand how team identity and silos correlate. Cilliers and Greyvenstein (2012) led a descriptive study, deploying a qualitative study method and carried out twenty-five narrative interviews in an attempt to identify the underlying constructs of silo mentality. The findings of this study point to factors such as the physical organizational structure, intra-group and inter-group relations, and experience of managers. The key takeaway for managers is that silos should not only be looked at as physical structures, but also manifestations that lie in employee's unconscious minds (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012; De Silva et al., 2017; Maghfuriyah et al., 2019). A shortcoming of this study, however, can be noted as it has limited data collection to qualitative measures; usage of a quantitative method such as structured questionnaires would add dimension and validity to findings and cement the theories in relation to silo mentality, especially given that it is a social phenomenon (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

The role of organizational structure in fostering silo mentality has garnered significant attention in recent years (Barnard & Henriques, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019; Kuruwitaarachchi et al., 2019). Hierarchical and departmentalized structures have been identified as breeding grounds for silos. These structures create distinct functional units that may become insular, limiting communication and cooperation across departments (Molloy et al., 2019). Contemporary scholars emphasize that organizations must adapt their structures to encourage cross-functional collaboration. Newer structural approaches, such as matrix organizations or flat hierarchies, aim to break down traditional barriers and promote a more integrated and agile workforce (Barnard & Henriques, 2017).

Other researchers have studied silos in organizations as a metaphor for organizational dysfunction. Briody and Erickson (2014) looked at the factors that come into play when organizations are required to synergize despite existing silos in the face of innovation and collaboration needs. Their study contributes value to existing literature as it looks at identifying the varying factors across companies belonging to the apparel, automotive, and healthcare

industry. Findings of this study show that the behavior of silo mentality remains the same across the industries and collaboration and alignment to common goals can alleviate the impacts of silo mentality across organizations (Briody & Erickson, 2014; Dewi et al., 2019; Katukurunda et al., 2019). What sets this study apart is the attempt to look at varying factors across industries thereby supporting the generalizability of its findings. The factors can be further tested through application to other industries and further narrowed down to gain insight into the varying factors across the generations within organizations.

Exploratory studies have also been undertaken to identify silo as a paradox of psychological disconnect leading to employee conflict and tension (Adam-Ledunois & Damart, 2016; Tham et al., 2017; Rachmawati et al., 2019). This study attempted to explain silo representation amongst managers in the healthcare industry. Findings of the study prove that the organization structure, occupational category, and level of reference all influence the level of silo representation across two healthcare organizations. Although the study contributed to the existing body of literature, it can be argued that it to be non-comprehensive, or one-sided, in the sense that the sample population only includes employees at managerial roles (Azam et al., 2021; Azam et al., 2023), thereby failing to validate the study, and understanding of how levels of silo mentality function across all levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Recent research emphasizes the role of leadership style in shaping silo mentality. Autocratic and hierarchical leadership styles have been found to encourage silos by stifling open communication and discouraging cross-functional collaboration (Cameron & Quinn, 2020). Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping an organization's culture and behavior (Bass & Bass, 2019). Recent research highlights that autocratic or transactional leadership styles can contribute to silo mentality by stifling open communication and innovation (Xu et al., 2020). Leaders who embrace a transformational style, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, tend to mitigate the formation of silos (Xu et al., 2020). Transformational leaders inspire their teams, encourage collaboration, and foster a sense of shared purpose, thereby breaking down siloed thinking.

While communication has long been recognized as a critical factor in silo formation, contemporary studies reveal evolving challenges. The digital age has introduced new complexities to communication dynamics within organizations (Molloy et al., 2019). The widespread use of digital tools, especially during remote work arrangements, can impact the quality and quantity of interpersonal interactions. In some cases, the reliance on digital communication may reduce the depth of relationships among colleagues (Xu et al., 2020). Effective communication now requires adapting to these changing modes while also preserving opportunities for face-to-face interaction to build trust and cohesion (Molloy et al., 2019). The impact of technology on silo mentality is also reported as evident in contemporary workplaces. Outdated or incompatible technological systems can create barriers that hinder interdepartmental communication and collaboration (Smith & Gray, 2019). The pervasive role of technology in the modern workplace is undeniable. While digital tools enhance communication and information sharing, over-reliance on them without fostering face-to-face interaction can have adverse effects (Tarofder et al., 2017; Udriyah et al., 2019; Molloy et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2020). It is crucial for organizations to strike a balance between leveraging

technology for efficiency and preserving opportunities for human interaction and relationship-building, which are vital for breaking down silos.

Additionally, the organizational culture is found to significantly influence the presence of silos. Cultures emphasizing individualism, competition, and departmentalism over cooperation have proven to foster silo thinking (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2019). Furthermore, diversity and inclusion efforts in organizations have been identified as both a remedy and a potential antecedent to silo mentality. While diversity can enrich perspectives and promote innovative thinking, research suggests that organizations that do not foster diverse teams may inadvertently nurture homogenous thinking and silos (Molloy et al., 2019). Additionally, exclusionary practices, such as sidelining certain groups or individuals, can lead to feelings of mistrust and territoriality among employees, exacerbating silo mentality (Xu et al., 2020). Contemporary organizations need to strike a balance between promoting diversity and ensuring that inclusion efforts are genuinely inclusive, fostering a sense of belonging among all employees. Other researchers have found that incentive structures within organizations play a pivotal role. When employees are primarily rewarded for individual or departmental achievements, rather than collaborative efforts, silos are more likely to emerge (Lazear & Shaw, 2020).

Key research in the field of organizational silos revolve around the concept of knowledge sharing within organizations. Presented with the research problem arising due to the isolation amongst functional business areas working in silos, researchers have attempted to inscribe how a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing can help employees grow outside the confinement of silos (Talsma, 2016). This researcher looks at one organization which functions across multiple geographical locations, conducting secondary analysis in attempts to identify patterns. Findings from the research prove that leaders are required to cultivate collaborative cultures in which employees across functions are forced to work together and share information, thereby overcoming the negative distance created by the silo mentality (Talsma, 2016). Although such findings have added value to existing research, the research is a case study with focus on a single organization, and thus it requires further research to be conducted in order to understand how knowledge sharing and collaboration can be deployed as a rebuttal against the construct of silos.

Further enriching existing literature on the relationship between organizational silos, collaboration and knowledge sharing, Mohapeloa (2017) explores the effects of silo mentality on an organizational level utilizing the elements of business model canvas. Through a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted amongst a convenience sample of twelve participants belonging to a single company. The findings of this study can be considered to be a key contribution to the realm of literature as it comprehensively analyzes key aspects of silo mentality. The key takeaway from this study being that silos do not only affect the individual employee, but also have a profound impact on products, value proposition offered to customers, relationship with partners, customers, and stakeholders (Mohapeloa, 2017; Haque et al., 2014; Pambreni et al., 2019). Thereby, the silo mentality hinders lasting positive effects on the internal capabilities and key resources of the firm. Another key takeaway from the study is that silo mentalities create bottlenecks within the organization's process flow, thus, hindering the achievement of common goals and objectives (Hill, 2012). As with many other

studies contributing to silo literature, the research can also be argued to be one dimensional due to the qualitative nature of the study and its focus on only one company.

Other researchers have looked at the underpinnings of how to overcome negative effects created by silos through human resource management. Findings of their study show that respondents believe that in order to overcome barriers of silos, managers must be competent outside their fields such as a technical manager possessing finance or marketing knowledge (Astikainen, Laukkanen, Lämsä, & Hyrkäs, 2017). This school of researchers also suggest that through formation of communities of practice (CoPs), a platform for collaboration and synergy, will aid in fostering cross silo boundary work relationships. Further value can be added to this research by applying the findings across the wider company, in addition to human resources. Understanding the antecedents of silo mentality is crucial for organizations seeking to foster collaboration and innovation. Recent research highlights the multifaceted nature of these antecedents, emphasizing the intricate interplay among leadership style, organizational culture, communication barriers, incentive structures, technological factors, and workforce diversity. By addressing these factors, organizations can proactively dismantle silos and create a more integrated and collaborative work environment.

Prevalence of Silo Mentality Among Millennials

Silo mentality is a well-recognized phenomenon in organizational behavior that continues to affect workplaces across various industries. This phenomenon refers to the development of isolated and self-contained units or departments within an organization, which often leads to significant barriers in communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing (Barnard & Henriques, 2017). These silos can hinder an organization's agility, innovation, and overall performance. As millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, become an increasingly substantial part of the contemporary workforce, understanding how this generation intersects with and responds to the challenge of silo mentality becomes paramount.

One of the defining characteristics of millennials is their strong emphasis on collaboration and teamwork. Growing up in an era of digital interconnectedness, they tend to thrive in environments that encourage open communication and information sharing (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). This trait often contrasts with the traditional siloed structures found within many organizations, structures that inherently inhibit such collaboration. As a result, millennials frequently find themselves at odds with the silo mentality, seeking ways to break down these barriers and promote cross-functional collaboration.

Furthermore, millennials are known for their desire for purpose-driven work (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). They are more likely to engage in initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and shared goals, which can counteract the isolation often associated with siloed departments. Millennials' preference for flatter organizational structures, where hierarchies are less rigid, and decision-making is more inclusive, runs counter to the top-down hierarchies that often perpetuate silos (Deloitte, 2020). However, addressing silo mentality within the context of millennials also presents unique challenges. They may encounter resistance from older generations, who are more accustomed to traditional organizational structures. Bridging this generational gap and promoting collaboration across diverse age groups can be a complex endeavor (PwC, 2019).

To mitigate silo mentality among millennials, organizations must adapt their structures and practices. They should consider embracing more flexible, matrix-based organizational designs that promote cross-functional teams and project-based work (Deloitte, 2020). Additionally, fostering a culture of open communication and knowledge sharing, supported by digital tools and platforms, can facilitate collaboration among millennials and across generations (Bersin, 2016). Research exploring the intersection of millennials and silo mentality is an evolving field, and recent studies have made significant contributions. These studies have shed light on the impact of generational differences on workplace dynamics, revealing the challenges and opportunities presented by millennials' attitudes and expectations (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). For example, recent research indicates that millennials are more likely to seek employers who prioritize transparency, diversity, and inclusion—all of which can contribute to breaking down silos (PwC, 2019). Millennials' tech-savvy nature can also be leveraged to create digital communication platforms that encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration (Barnard & Henriques, 2017). With millennials taking on increasingly influential roles in the workforce, their distinctive values and preferences offer both challenges and solutions in the quest to dismantle silos. Organizations that adapt to these generational shifts by fostering collaboration, embracing purpose-driven work, and adopting flexible structures will be better equipped to address the persistent challenge of silo mentality in the modern workplace. Further research in this area is essential to refine strategies and promote more inclusive, collaborative work environments.

More than ever before, the employee now has a greater impact in shaping the organization work culture and success. Every generation present in the workforce presents attributable differences (Urbanovičová, Mikulášková, Čambál, & Edl, 2019). In a time where the millennial employee constitutes the majority of the employed population, managerial efforts are forced to shift from conventional focus on pay and job tasks to that of fostering cultural artefacts. This focus shift is partly due to the new age of working and the fast-paced nature of it all, the other, is due to cultural facets in two phases; innovation culture of the organization, and the intrapreneurial nature of employees. Inevitable differences across the gamut of generations now have significant influence on the work behaviour of employees, and therefore paving the way for individualistic behaviour.

The differences in generations is a fundamental basis on which the silos mentality is constructed. Although we are in a time of fostering diversity, this diversity poses complexities which require careful attention in breaking through the barriers which are established by the silo mentality. There is a gap in the existing body of knowledge which looks at explaining this phenomenon with a curated focus on millennials. The importance of further research to understand silo mentality among millennials is reinforced by this gap.

The millennial employee thrives on engagement and collaboration; they also seek to serve a deeper purpose in doing their job role. This translates to the employee wanting to transcend through mundane day-to-day tasks to that of bigger, strategic levels, therefore in order to harness the maximum potential of each employee, the organizations need to overcome barriers and disconnect and grow to a place of strategic alignment. Aligning and gearing the many different mindsets to work cohesively towards the organizations common goals is now a basic requirement for business survival. To elevate the organizational culture is the ability to surpass

mental departmentalization on employee mindsets and foster a deeper sense of belonging to the organization through intrapreneurial behaviour, and to foster a growth mindset in terms of innovation in work culture.

Concluding Remarks

Silo mentality, the often-discussed phenomenon in the world of organizational behavior, remains a multifaceted and complex issue. While significant strides have been made in understanding the nature, origins, and effects of silos within organizations, numerous aspects of this pervasive challenge remain unexplored. As such, there is a compelling call for further research to delve deeper into this intricate subject, especially in light of the evolving workforce dynamics, where millennials play an increasingly dominant role.

Past research has undeniably contributed to our comprehension of silo mentality. It has illuminated the various factors contributing to the creation and perpetuation of silos, including organizational culture, leadership practices, and communication barriers. Moreover, researchers have meticulously detailed the detrimental effects of silo mentality, such as hindering knowledge sharing, stifling collaboration, and impeding innovation. However, in today's organizational landscape, marked by the coexistence of multiple generations, including the significant presence of millennials, our understanding of silo mentality must evolve.

The introduction of millennials into the workforce has introduced fresh dynamics and challenges. Millennials are known for their distinct values, preferences, and work styles, characterized by a penchant for collaboration, a commitment to purpose-driven work, and a preference for open and transparent communication. These traits are fundamentally at odds with the siloed approach that characterizes organizations plagued by silo mentality. Therefore, investigating how silo mentality affects millennials and, conversely, how millennials influence the prevalence of silo mentality is of paramount importance.

At its core, this research endeavor aims to uncover the interplay between a generation that values interconnectedness and a phenomenon that erects barriers within organizations. By doing so, researchers can contribute to the development of strategies and interventions that are not only tailored to the unique characteristics of millennials but also promote an organizational culture that is conducive to breaking down silos beyond generations.

In conclusion, while we have made significant strides in understanding silo mentality, the evolving workforce landscape necessitates a re-evaluation of this phenomenon. The presence of millennials, with their distinct values and preferences, calls for a fresh perspective on the implications of silo mentality. Therefore, further research in this domain is not only warranted but vital. It is through this research that we can unlock the enigma of silo mentality in the context of today's multi-generational workforce, paving the way for more effective organizational strategies and enhanced workplace dynamics.

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