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## Employee silence hurts bottom line and staff performance, Laurier researchers find

WATERLOO – Employees are often the best resource for employers to learn about the challenges, opportunities and potential improvements for the organization, but more than 85 per cent of managers and professionals admit to withholding critical information in the workplace.

Why is this problematic? New research by Laurier doctoral student David Whiteside and Professor Laurie Barclay suggests that the bottom line is not the only thing that is negatively affected when employees remain silent in the workplace – employees' well-being and effectiveness can also suffer.

Their research will be published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* in an article titled "Echoes of silence: Employee silence as a mediator between overall fairness and employee outcomes." The article is based on Whiteside's Master of Science research, for which he won the Best Masters Thesis in Canada award from the Human Resources Research Institute, part of the Human Resources Professional Association.

The research found that employees who remained silent were found to have lower performance, were less able to cope with job demands, and were more likely to disengage from their work (e.g. daydream, leave work early) than employees who did not feel the need to remain silent. In addition to the detrimental toll on employees, the research also suggests that organizations are directly affected by losing access to critical information and indirectly affected by increased health-care costs and decreased employee efficiency.

"Employees may feel they're unable to make a difference or are frightened of the repercussions of speaking up," said Whiteside. "Employee silence can be prevented by treating employees fairly and with dignity and respect, ensuring their rewards are justified, and ensuring that procedures are implemented consistently and without bias."

For more information about this research, please contact Whiteside at [whit6090@mylaurier.ca](mailto:whit6090@mylaurier.ca).

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