

Exploring the Contextual Meaning of Silence in Emotionally Abused Married Women

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sentence “In such dynamics, silence often becomes a core behavioral and psychological response” is compelling but would benefit from empirical support. Consider adding a citation from studies in trauma psychology or interpersonal communication theory to reinforce this claim.

In discussing cultural norms, the phrase “patience, sacrifice, and obedience” could be enhanced with a brief reference to specific religious or cultural systems prevalent in Taiwan or other East Asian societies to contextualize the argument more precisely.

The authors mention that interviews were translated from Mandarin to English. It is advisable to specify how the back-translation process ensured fidelity and whether any intercoder or interlingual reliability checks were performed.

The authors state that “saturation was achieved after 18 interviews.” Please provide more detail: What specific indicators or coding thresholds were used to determine saturation? Was this discussed with peer reviewers or audit members?

The manuscript notes the use of NVivo 14 and Braun & Clarke’s six-phase approach. It would enhance transparency to briefly state how many initial codes were generated and how they were condensed into the final themes.

While member checking and peer debriefing are mentioned, triangulation is asserted but not fully described. Elaborate on how triangulation was operationalized—was it methodological (e.g., combining interview and observation), theoretical, or investigator triangulation?

The sentence “This purposive sample provided a diverse yet thematically rich representation...” is strong, but you should briefly explain how diversity (e.g., in employment or education) influenced thematic variability or saturation.

The table would benefit from a clearer visual hierarchy. Consider placing “Theme,” “Subcategory,” and “Concepts” as column headers rather than labeling within rows, which currently appears cluttered.

You mention “emotional paralysis” as a cognitive and emotional block. The term “alexithymia” might be usefully introduced or explored here as it relates directly to the inability to verbalize emotion.

The statement “Many participants described silence as a form of expression...” should be tied more clearly to feminist linguistic theory, especially as it pertains to narrative absence, voice, and agency.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. *Reviewer 2*

Reviewer:

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic abuse is mentioned. While the citation of Boxall & Morgan (2020) is appropriate, it would be useful to clarify whether any pandemic-specific dynamics emerged in the Taiwanese context or were evident in participant narratives.

The criterion “expressing silence as a recurring or significant behavioral pattern in the relationship” seems somewhat subjective. Clarify how this was assessed or confirmed before interviews—was there a screening question or pre-interview discussion?

The quoted participant remark, “Sometimes I waited...”, is compelling. However, it would be beneficial to specify whether such strategic uses of silence were more common among certain subgroups (e.g., education level or age).

The sentence “My mother told me to stay quiet and save the marriage” could be more analytically unpacked. You might consider linking it more explicitly to the notion of intergenerational transmission of submissive coping styles.

The quote “My body spoke for me” is powerful. This subtheme might be enriched by referring to embodiment theory or trauma-related somatic silence literature (e.g., Van der Kolk).

The authors write, “This aligns with research by Guermazi et al. (2024)...” This is a good link, but the discussion could benefit from further comparison with data from non-MENA or non-Asian countries to emphasize cross-cultural relevance or contrast.

The line “These cross-cultural parallels point to the pervasive and systemic forces...” is very strong. However, consider drawing in structural violence theory or intersectionality as frameworks to deepen the analysis.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.