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**Pact of Silence and Phenomenological-existential Psychology:
understanding specificities!**

**Pacto do Silêncio e Psicologia Fenomenológico-Existencial:
compreendendo especificidades!**

**Pacte de silence et Psychologie Phénoménologique-existentielle:
comprendre les spécificités!**

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Abstract

The pact of silence can be understood as a social phenomenon that reflects the tendency to repress or ignore experiences and truths that need to be expressed. In clinical or therapeutic contexts, this pact can manifest itself as a significant obstacle to communication and mutual understanding, resulting in a space where the subject's emotions and experiences remain inarticulate. Phenomenological-existential psychology, in turn, emphasizes the importance of the lived context and personal stories in the formation of identity. It is a theoretical, qualitative perspective that is embodied in the possibility of understanding the various dimensions present in the experience of silencing present in the therapeutic relationship and the importance of the phenomenological-existential perspective in understanding what is present there. The discourse surrounding the "Pact of Silence" reinforces the importance of embracing existential dilemmas in psychological practice. It recognizes silence as a powerful instrument that reflects the struggle for identity, meaning, and connection in an often chaotic world. In this way, fostering awareness of the complexities surrounding silence in therapeutic settings not only enhances understanding of clients' lived experiences, but also enriches the therapeutic relationship itself. Through this lens, silence transforms from a barrier to a catalyst for growth, guiding individuals toward greater understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Mindfully engaging with silence can ultimately lead to a deeper experience of existence, where clients learn to articulate their truths and reclaim their voices in the narratives of their lives.

Keywords: Pact of Silence; Phenomenological-Existential Psychology; Therapeutic Relationship; Identity; Existence

Resumo

O pacto do silêncio pode ser entendido como fenômeno social que reflete a tendência de reprimir ou ignorar experiências e verdades que precisam ser expressas. Em contextos clínicos ou terapêuticos, esse pacto pode se manifestar como obstáculo significativo à comunicação e à compreensão mútua, resultando em espaço onde as emoções e as vivências do sujeito permanecem inarticuladas. A psicologia fenomenológico-existencial, por sua vez, enfatiza a importância do contexto vivido e das histórias pessoais na formação da identidade. É uma

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perspectiva teórica, qualitativa, que se consubstancia na possibilidade de compreender as várias dimensões presentes na vivência do silenciamento presente na relação terapêutica e a importância da perspectiva fenomenológico-existencial na compreensão do que aí está presente. O discurso em torno do "Pacto do Silêncio" reforça a importância de abraçar dilemas existenciais na prática psicológica. Reconhece o silêncio como um instrumento poderoso que reflete a luta por identidade, significado e conexão em um mundo frequentemente caótico. Desse modo, promover a consciência das complexidades que cercam o silêncio em ambientes terapêuticos não apenas aprimora a compreensão das experiências vividas pelos clientes, mas também enriquece o próprio relacionamento terapêutico. Por meio dessa lente, o silêncio se transforma de barreira em catalisador para o crescimento, guiando os indivíduos em direção a maior compreensão de si mesmos e de seu lugar no mundo. Envolver-se cuidadosamente com o silêncio pode, em última análise, levar a experiência mais profunda da existência, onde os clientes aprendem a articular suas verdades e a resgatar suas vozes nas narrativas de suas vidas.

Palavras-chave: Pacto do Silêncio; Psicologia Fenomenológico-Existencial; Relação terapêutica; Identidade; Existência

Résumé

Le pacte de silence peut être compris comme un phénomène social reflétant la tendance à réprimer ou à ignorer des expériences et des vérités qui doivent être exprimées. Dans un contexte clinique ou thérapeutique, ce pacte peut se manifester comme un obstacle important à la communication et à la compréhension mutuelle, créant un espace où les émotions et les expériences du sujet restent inarticulées. La psychologie phénoménologique et existentielle, quant à elle, souligne l'importance du contexte vécu et des histoires personnelles dans la formation de l'identité. Il s'agit d'une perspective théorique et qualitative qui se concrétise par la possibilité de comprendre les différentes dimensions de l'expérience du silence dans la relation thérapeutique et par l'importance de la perspective phénoménologique et existentielle pour comprendre ce qui y est présent. Le discours autour du « Pacte de silence » renforce l'importance d'aborder les dilemmes existentiels dans la pratique psychologique. Il reconnaît le silence comme un instrument puissant reflétant la lutte pour l'identité, le sens et le lien dans un monde souvent chaotique. Ainsi, favoriser la prise de conscience des complexités entourant le silence en contexte thérapeutique permet non seulement de mieux comprendre le vécu des patients, mais aussi d'enrichir la relation thérapeutique elle-même. De ce point de vue, le silence, autrefois obstacle, devient un catalyseur de croissance, guidant les individus vers une meilleure compréhension d'eux-mêmes et de leur place dans le monde. S'engager consciemment avec le silence peut



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finalmente conduire à une expérience plus profonde de l'existence, où les patients apprennent à exprimer leurs vérités et à se réapproprier leur voix dans le récit de leur vie.

Mots-clés : Pacte de silence ; Psychologie phénoménologique et existentielle ; Relation thérapeutique ; Identité ; Existence

1. By way of introduction

The intersection between the pact of silence and phenomenological-existential psychology offers fertile ground for critical reflection and the appreciation of individual experience within the interpersonal context. The pact of silence can be understood as a social phenomenon that reflects the tendency to repress or ignore experiences and truths that need to be expressed. In clinical or therapeutic contexts, this pact can manifest itself as a significant obstacle to communication and mutual understanding, resulting in a space where the subject's emotions and experiences remain inarticulate. It is against this backdrop that phenomenology and existential ethics intertwine, promoting a deeper analysis of the emotional and cognitive constructions that shape human experience.

Phenomenological-existential psychology, in turn, emphasizes the importance of lived context and personal stories in the formation of identity. Through a perspective that values subjectivity and the uniqueness of experience, therapists are invited to explore the narratives that clients bring, always paying attention to the impact that the pact of silence can have on these accounts. This perspective allows for the deconstruction of the barriers that silence imposes, facilitating a therapeutic space where authentic expressions are not only encouraged, but considered crucial for personal transformation. Therapeutic practices that advocate openness and active listening promote the process of unveiling hidden truths, while also offering support to each individual's existential journey (Maichin, 2024).



Thus, at this point we not only present the theoretical and practical context that intertwines the pact of silence and phenomenological-existential psychology, but also establish the basis for the subsequent discussion on how these concepts interact and manifest themselves in clinical practice. The reflection on the need to break with silence and provide an environment for dialogue therefore becomes a crucial point for understanding the impact that the therapeutic relationship can have on the lives of individuals. This highlights the importance of this subject in the search for a deeper understanding of the human condition, highlighting the relevance of silence and active listening in the development of mental health and well-being (Alves & Scorsolini-Comin, 2024; Tochetto & Conte, 2022).

2. Foundations of Phenomenological-Existential Psychology

Phenomenological-Existential Psychology emerges as a perspective that seeks to understand human experience in its singularity and complexity. Its roots are strongly anchored in existentialist philosophy, which explores themes such as freedom, purpose, and the nature of existence (Castro, 2025). The emphasis is on subjective experience, where individual consciousness and perception are seen as central to understanding the human being. As this current developed, it incorporated concepts from phenomenology, which examines how phenomena are perceived and interpreted, focusing on the description of lived experiences rather than reducing behaviors to biological or social determinants (Meira & Castro, 2024).

The main theorists who guided this approach, such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and, later, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, proposed that the human condition is marked by an intrinsic relationship with the world. Husserl introduced the idea of “epoché,” the suspension of judgment about reality in order to explore the essence of experiences as they present themselves. Heidegger, in turn, delved deeper into the concept of “being-in-the-world,” emphasizing the interconnection between the individual and his or her existential context. The works of these thinkers provide the theoretical basis that underpins the



clinical practices of phenomenological-existential psychology, allowing for a richer understanding of subjectivity.

One of the key concepts of this approach is the notion of authenticity, which concerns the individual's ability to live according to his or her own truths and values rather than conforming to external pressures. Suffering and anxiety are often reinterpreted within this framework; rather than mere symptoms to be eradicated, they are seen as an integral part of the human condition that can lead to personal growth and change. Furthermore, the emphasis on interpersonal relationships and empathy highlights the importance of the therapeutic bond, recognizing that personal transformation is often facilitated by the genuine connection between therapist and client. Thus, the foundations of Phenomenological-Existential Psychology not only provide a robust theoretical framework, but also point to the relevance of lived experience in contemporary therapeutic practices (Benicio et al., 2025; Castro et al., 2025).

2.1. History and Development

The development of phenomenological-existential psychology emerged as a response to, and in many ways a revolution in, the prevailing epistemological and methodological guidelines in early twentieth-century psychology. This movement began to gain momentum in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in Europe, where figures such as Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger paved the way by emphasizing subjective experience and understanding the human being from his or her own perspective. It sought to move away from the limitations of observable behavior, providing a new paradigm that values lived experience, attributed meanings, and the individual's authenticity in his or her existence (Meira et al., 2024).

In the years that followed, these concepts were readily absorbed and expanded by psychologists and philosophers such as Carl Rogers and Rollo May, who integrated existential principles into clinical practice. From his works, a perspective emerged that not only reevaluated the therapist as a mere observer, but presented him as a facilitator in the client's process of self-discovery. This approach



led to an emphasis on free will, personal responsibility, and the human capacity for change. The fight against alienation and existential emptiness became a central theme, cultivating critical awareness about the impact of modernity and society on individual life (Castro, 2020; 2023).

Over the years, phenomenological-existential psychology has consolidated itself as a rigorous and respected branch of psychological sciences, converging with advances in phenomenology, literature, and the arts. In contemporary times, its relevance remains evident, especially in its applications in psychological therapy and in the understanding of human suffering. Thus, one can observe a continuous evolution in the way professionals understand and approach the existential dilemmas of modern life. This approach highlights the importance of paying close attention to subjective experience, constituting a significant legacy that still shapes relevant therapeutic and theoretical practices in the field of psychology (Silva & Castro, 2025).

2.2. Main Theorists

Phenomenological-Existential Psychology, based on the search for understanding human experience in its totality and singularity, converged around several prominent figures who shaped its principles and practices. Among these, Alfred Adler stands out for his emphasis on individuality and the search for meaning, postulating that individuals are motivated by feelings of inferiority and the need to overcome. His person-centered approach, although not directly classified as phenomenological, profoundly influenced other existential currents, especially in considering the role of consciousness in the construction of reality and identity. (Castro et al., 2025)

Jean-Paul Sartre, a central philosopher in existentialist literature, emphasized human freedom and individual responsibility, crucial elements for understanding existential psychology. In his work, he argued that existence precedes essence, challenging traditional narratives that attempted to define the human being in a prescriptive way. This idea that individuals are the authors of their



own lives and meanings resonated strongly with theorists of phenomenological psychology, who promote freedom of choice as fundamental in the formation of subjective experiences (Meira & Castro, 2024). Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty also played significant roles in shaping this discipline. Heidegger introduced the notion of “being-in-the-world,” emphasizing the interdependence between individuals and their existential and temporal context. This perspective resonated in clinical practice, where emphasis is placed on how personal history and social bonds shape human experience. Merleau-Ponty, in turn, contributed to the understanding of the body as an essential means of experience, emphasizing that corporeality is integral to understanding perception and action. Through its ideas, phenomenological-existential psychology emerged as a field that values subjectivity, exploring the uniqueness of human experiences with a focus that challenges reductionist and objective approaches, seeking a deep understanding of existence in its multiple facets (Meira et al., 2025).

2.3. Key Concepts

Phenomenological-existential psychology, as a theory and practice, rests on a set of key concepts that illuminate its foundation and therapeutic directions. One of the central pillars is “subjective experience”, which refers to how the individual perceives and gives meaning to their experiences. The emphasis on this subjective dimension is crucial, as it allows the therapist to understand each client's reality on their own terms, recognizing that the experience is unique and deeply personal. This idea leads us to the notion of “embodied experience”, which suggests that subjective experience is inextricably linked to the body and emotions. This relationship allows for a richer exploration of the human being that goes beyond cognitive narratives (Silva & Castro, 2025).

Another fundamental concept is that of “freedom and responsibility”. Phenomenological-existential psychology proposes that, although individuals are immersed in social and cultural contexts, they still play an active role in the construction of their identities and meanings. This perspective fosters the notion of



agency, suggesting that each person, even when faced with adverse conditions, has the ability to choose their reactions, decisions, and actions. In this context, “authenticity” emerges as a crucial value, involving the search for living authentically and in harmony with one’s true self, while at the same time taking responsibility for the consequences of these choices (Castro et al., 2025). Finally, the notion of “existence” occupies a central place in this paradigm, since it emphasizes the human condition in its entirety—involving the dilemmas of living, the search for meaning, and the challenges inherent to finitude. Issues such as existential angst, loneliness, and the search for connection become rich themes for psychological research. This approach allows for a deep dive into the complexities of human experience, inviting both therapist and client to committed and authentic reflection, capable of forging new meanings and enabling significant transformations. Together, these key concepts support not only therapeutic practice, but also the way of understanding the human being in its entirety (Silva et al., 2025).

3. The Pact of Silence: Definition and Context

The “Pact of Silence” refers to a social and psychological phenomenon characterized by the collective decision not to express certain thoughts, feelings, or experiences, usually in contexts where fear, shame, or stigma are predominant. This pact implies the tacit acceptance among individuals to silence aspects of their lives, often to protect their own identity or reputation within the social group. It arises as a response to situations involving emotional vulnerability, trauma, or stigma associated with behaviors considered unacceptable in specific cultural norms. The definition of this concept spans several areas of knowledge, including psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, reflecting the complexity of how social interactions shape individual expression (Rodrigues & Paulino, 2022; Ribeiro, 2022).

The origin of the term “Pact of Silence” is part of contemporary dialogues about emotional cyclone, social restrictions, and the dynamics of interpersonal communication. By analyzing different historical and social contexts, it is possible to observe how this phenomenon manifests itself in different cultures, each with its



own peculiarities. For example, in societies that value a pattern of success and triumph, failure can be a taboo subject, leading individuals to hide their struggles and experiences. This not only perpetuates a culture of isolation, but also impacts individuals' mental health and emotional development, creating a pernicious cycle that is reflected in issues of self-esteem and self-image (Martino et al. 2023). The cultural implications of the Pact of Silence are striking, since rejecting communication about certain experiences can reinforce stigmas, create barriers in the search for support, and generate an environment prone to loneliness. At a deeper level, pacts can be observed in family, community, and professional contexts, where implicit norms about what should or should not be shared shape behaviors and interactions. This process makes it even more difficult to recognize emotional difficulties and seek professional help, which is essential for healing and improving psychological well-being. Therefore, the analysis of the “Pact of Silence” reveals not only a self-protection mechanism, but also an invitation to reflect on the importance of open communication and empathy in human relationships, highlighting how cultural change is vital to breaking the chains of this phenomenon (Oliveira, 2023).

3.2. Cultural Implications

As the “Pact of Silence” permeates diverse cultural landscapes, its implications extend deeply into the realms of social identity, community dynamics, and psychological well-being. Across cultures, this pact of silence often manifests as an unspoken agreement that shapes interpersonal relationships and collective consciousness. In contexts marked by stigma or trauma, such as among marginalized populations or those recovering from conflict, silence serves as both a protective mechanism and a barrier to healing. By choosing not to disclose painful experiences or grievances, individuals may protect themselves and their communities from further harm; however, this choice also perpetuates cycles of silence that hinder trauma processing and inhibit genuine connection. (Nag, 2023) (Ding, 2023)



In many cultures, narratives around masculinity and vulnerability reinforce the pact, where emotional expression is often perceived as a weakness. This conditioning fosters environments that discourage vulnerability and the sharing of distressing experiences, leading to an internalized struggle in which individuals deal with their problems in silence. Consequently, mental health issues can proliferate in these silenced communities, exacerbated by taboos against therapy or emotional discourse. Furthermore, the implications of the “Pact of Silence” can extend to broader social contexts, where communal silence around issues such as abuse, discrimination, and existential anxiety can reinforce systemic injustices.

Furthermore, the intersection of cultural practices and the “Pact of Silence” presents a complex landscape for mental health interventions. Psychologists and practitioners working within phenomenological-existential frameworks are challenged to navigate these cultural nuances, emphasizing the importance of fostering open dialogues. Establishing safe spaces for storytelling and emotional expression becomes imperative to breaking the silence, allowing individuals to reclaim their narratives while engaging in a community process of healing. Ultimately, understanding the cultural implications of the “Pact of Silence” is necessary for developing effective therapeutic approaches that honor both individual experiences and collective histories, paving the way for transformation and resilience in the face of adversity.

4. Relationship between the Pact of Silence and Psychology

The relationship between the Pact of Silence and Psychology is based on the understanding of the emotional and cognitive impacts that the experience of this pact can generate in individuals. The Pact of Silence, often observed in family and community contexts, can create an environment in which communication is stifled, leading to the internalization of traumas and suffering that manifest in the psychological spheres. For phenomenological-existential psychology, this dynamic proves crucial, as it considers subjective experience as central to the construction of the individual's reality. Silence, therefore, is not merely a factor of omission; it



becomes a powerful agent that shapes perceptions of oneself and others, interfering in interpersonal relationships and promoting a feeling of isolation.

Research in this area suggests that individuals who participate in environments marked by the Pact of Silence tend to develop a series of psychological adaptations, often problematic. These adaptations may include internal self-defense attitudes that make it difficult to reflect on oneself and seek help, since verbalizing feelings is often discouraged. Scholars point out that fear of judgment and rejection can lead to disorganization in the individual's self-image and identity, resulting in symptoms of anxiety and depression. Through case studies, it has been observed that breaking this pact and the possibility of open dialogue not only promote emotional recovery, but also facilitate the construction of a healthier and more integrated identity (Martins, 2021).

Thus, the intersection between the Pact of Silence and Psychology reveals a complex web of meanings and difficulties that deserve to be explored in depth. The role of psychology professionals is fundamental in revealing these silences, offering a safe space for the subject's voice to emerge. The phenomenological-existential approach, by emphasizing the singularity of human experience, provides analytical tools that help decipher the psychic impacts of silence, promoting a broader understanding of the realities experienced by individuals. Therapeutic practice, therefore, becomes not only an instrument of care, but also a fertile field for the resignification of experience and the search for new personal narratives (Ribeiro, 2025; Tait, 2025).

4.1. Psychological Impacts

The psychological impacts of the “Pact of Silence” are multifaceted and indelible, reflecting the complex interactions between silencing, repression, and the mental health of affected individuals. This pact, often observed in contexts of collective trauma, acts as an apparent protection for victims, but paradoxically results in harmful consequences. The prohibition of speaking about traumatic experiences often leads to the internalization of suffering, manifesting itself in



various conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders. Unexpressed emotions become a burden, as silence forces individuals to live with painful memories, leading to a spiral of loneliness and despair.

In addition, the social impact of the “Pact of Silence” goes beyond the individual, molding collectives into a state of denial or cultural amnesia. When a community adopts this pact, it compromises its ability to process its history and deal with its traumatic narratives. This phenomenon has an inhibiting effect on emotional expression, hindering dialogues that could be cathartic and healing. Over time, subsequent generations may inherit this emotional burden and patterns of silence, perpetuating a vicious cycle of unrecognized pain and unresolved conflicts. The result is a culture that not only minimizes the severity of the traumas experienced, but also prevents the construction of mechanisms of collaboration and empathy (Costa et al. 2024). Consequently, the psychological impacts of the “Pact of Silence” highlight the importance of revisiting and reexamining these experiences, promoting an openness to communication and emotional validation. Therapists and psychologists who encounter this dynamic should seek interventions that emphasize personal narrative, helping individuals to dismantle the barriers created by silence (Barros, 2024). The phenomenological-existential approach offers space for these voices to finally be heard, promoting not only individual healing, but also contributing to the reconstitution of the collective identity that acknowledges its past. Thus, overcoming the "Pact of Silence" is not just a matter of mental health, but a societal need to build a healthier and more conscious future (Rodrigues & Paulino, 2022).

5. Subjective Experience and Silence

Subjective experience is one of the pillars in understanding silence, which transcends its mere definition as the absence of sound. In the context of phenomenological-existential psychology, silence emerges not only as an auditory phenomenon, but as a state of being that proposes an intrinsic relationship between the individual and their surroundings. This silence, therefore, can be interpreted as



a mental and emotional space, where introspection and self-observation gain prominence. Reflecting this notion, silence presents itself as a screen onto which feelings, thoughts and memories are projected, creating an environment conducive to the exploration of one's own subjectivity.

Although silence is often associated with loneliness, it can also serve as a means of genuine connection with oneself and others. In therapy contexts, for example, moments of silence can facilitate deeper listening, allowing unspoken emotions to be recognized and processed. The perception of silence is not homogeneous; varies according to the individual's life experiences, culture, and situational context. For some, silence can evoke anxiety or discomfort, while for others, it can be a source of peace and renewal. Thus, this dynamic relationship between silence and subjective experience is crucial to understanding how individuals interact with their emotions, influencing not only their mental state but also the way they relate to the outside world. (Soares & Meneghel, 2021)

Furthermore, awareness of the subjective experience in relation to silence is not limited to the individual level; it also encompasses the intersubjective dimension. Collective silence, for example, can create a shared space of empathy and mutual understanding, where words become unnecessary and communication occurs at deeper levels. This interconnection stands out in cultural and social contexts, where silence can be interpreted as resistance, contemplation, or even as a cry for freedom. The perception of silence, both at an individual and collective level, shapes the way in which individuals make sense of their lives and the experiences they share, thus revealing the complexity of this experience which, despite being difficult to articulate verbally, is rich in meaning and relevance in phenomenological-existential discourse (Chaves, 2025; Souza, 2023).

5.1. Silence as a Phenomenon

It is important to understand that silence, in the context of Phenomenological-Existential Psychology, is understood not as a mere absence of sound, but as a phenomenon loaded with meanings and subjective experiences. This concept



unfolds in multiple dimensions, where silence becomes an internal space for reflection, a moment of contemplation or, in some circumstances, a state of conflict and tension. Thus, when approaching it as a phenomenon, it is essential to recognize that silence is not neutral; it interacts deeply with the human psyche, reflecting not only the absence of external stimuli, but also resonating with the most intimate questions of existence.

One of the most intriguing aspects of silence is its ability to evoke ambivalent feelings. For some people, silence can be a shelter, a space where the mind can wander freely, allowing introspection and self-knowledge. For others, it can be a desert of solitude and discomfort, an indication of unspoken conversations or repressed emotions that yearn for expression. The experience of silence, therefore, is inextricably linked to personal narratives, memories, and expectations, revealing the spectrum of human vulnerabilities and possibilities (Medeiros, 2023). By recognizing this multiplicity of relationships with silence, phenomenological-existential psychology paves the way for a deeper analysis of lived experiences, emphasizing what silence communicates about the human condition (Barretto, 2024).

When examining silence as a phenomenon, it is important to consider the social and cultural contexts that shape its experience. Different cultures have different perceptions of the value of silence, which can be celebrated as a means of wisdom in some traditions, while in others it is seen as a communication gap. This variability highlights the importance of a contextualized perspective in psychology, allowing professionals to understand silence not only as an individual phenomenon, but also as a reflection of the social norms and interpersonal dynamics that permeate the subject's life (Moreira, 2022). By assimilating these factors, silence can be used as a powerful therapeutic tool, capable of facilitating internal dialogue and promoting emotional healing, transforming its own essence into a multiplicity of meanings and human connections.



5.2. Perception and Consciousness

The relationship between perception and consciousness is fundamental to understanding human subjective experience, especially in the context of phenomenological-existential psychology. Perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret sensory information, while consciousness represents the totality of subjective experience, encompassing thoughts, emotions, and self-awareness. This interdependence shapes the way individuals experience reality and forms the basis of their interactions with the world (Castro, 2023).

From a phenomenological perspective, perception is not a mere reflection of external reality, but rather the creative act in which the subject constructs meanings. This process is influenced by subjective factors, such as past experiences, emotional state, and even expectations. Husserl's theory, for example, emphasizes the importance of intentionality, the notion that all perception is directed toward an object, and thus shapes consciousness in a relational and dynamic context.

Furthermore, consciousness is a multi-bilateral phenomenon, where perception is not only a means of apprehending the world, but also a gateway to interiority. This interiority reveals the complexity of human emotions and how they manifest themselves in the experience of silence and introspection ((Almeida, 2025). Silence, in turn, can act as a catalyst that allows the expansion of consciousness, providing a mental space conducive to deep reflection. In this silent environment, the hegemony of everyday thought wavers, and the nuances of perception emerge clearly, revealing the internal richness of subjective life (Castro & Meira, 2024).

Thus, the analysis of perception and consciousness within the scope of the "Pact of Silence" not only enriches the understanding of human experience, but also highlights the importance of the phenomenological-existential context to deconstruct the way we interpret our experiences. The act of perceiving and being conscious intertwines in a continuous flow, where each moment lived brings to light new possibilities of meaning and understanding, inviting the individual to dive deeper into their own essence.



6. Silence in Phenomenological-Existential Therapy

Silence, as a fundamental practice in phenomenological-existential therapy, transcends the mere absence of words, assuming an active and dynamic role within the therapeutic context. At the core of this perspective, silence is used as a space for reflection, allowing the client to access feelings and thoughts that often remain hidden in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. This form of listening enables deep immersion in subjective experiences, which is essential for the exploration of the self. During sessions, coexistence with silence allows the therapist and client to establish a relationship of trust and authenticity, providing an environment conducive to the unveiling of existential aspects that would otherwise remain submerged (Castro, 2023).

Furthermore, silence is perceived as a therapeutic technique in itself, being used intentionally to create moments of pause and contemplation that favor the emergence of significant meanings from the client's experience. Through these communication gaps, the client is invited to inhabit them, reflecting on their emotions and thoughts without rushing to respond immediately. This practice is not limited to a simple pause in speech, but rather becomes an invitation for self-exploration, where each silence becomes a bridge to a greater understanding of one's own being and one's relationships with the world. Thus, the phenomenological-existential approach uses silence not as an obstacle, but as a tool that enriches the therapeutic relationship and enhances the process of change (Castro, 2020; 2023).

However, the implementation of silence in therapeutic practice is not without its challenges. For some clients, the experience of silence can generate discomfort and anxiety, since it can evoke feelings of vulnerability and loneliness. On the other hand, for others, this same silence can open new horizons for reflection and introspection. Therapists, therefore, need to be aware of these dynamics and adjust their willingness to create spaces of silence, guiding their interventions with empathy and sensitivity. The opportunities presented by silence are vast, including greater authentication of the client's experience and deeper connection between therapist



and client, reflecting the commitment of phenomenological-existential therapy to honoring the individuality and authenticity of the whole human being.

6.1. Therapeutic Techniques

Within the scope of phenomenological-existential therapy, the therapeutic techniques employed are intrinsically linked to the understanding of the individual's subjective experiences and the concept of silence as an element of transformation. Among these techniques, active listening stands out, which goes beyond simply hearing the client's words, involving attentive and empathetic presence. This form of listening allows the therapist not only to integrate the verbal content, but also to perceive the emotional nuances and personal meaning that the client attributes to their experiences. Pauses in the dialogue, highly valued in this perspective, provide moments of reflection that can facilitate the revelation of deep insights, allowing the client to access more subtle layers of their experience (Castro, 2020; 2023).

In addition to active listening, the technique of exploring significant experiences is fundamental in phenomenological-existential practice. Here, the therapist invites the client to report episodes of their life that have meaning. By expanding these narratives, the therapist allows the client to get in touch with their most authentic emotions and perceptions, promoting a space for self-exploration and self-discovery. This technique is intensified by the use of silence, which acts as a catalyst for reflection, allowing the client the opportunity to articulate thoughts that might otherwise remain hidden. Thus, silence becomes a therapeutic technique in itself, providing depth to the connection between therapist and client (Castro, 2023; Castro et al., 2025; Silva & Castro, 2025). In our view, phenomenological-existential psychology is not limited to listening and exploration alone, but also embraces authenticity in the therapeutic relationship. The therapist is encouraged to bring his or her own humanization to the therapeutic space, affecting not only the relationship between the parties, but also the process of creating meaning. Transparency and vulnerability, through the judicious use of silence and speech, act as powerful tools that stimulate the creation of an environment of trust and openness. Therefore, the



therapeutic techniques of phenomenological-existential therapy are not restricted to pre-established methods, but evolve in a continuous interweaving of experiences lived between therapist and client, where silence manifests itself as a means of elaborating and transforming human experience (Castro, 2023).

6.2. Challenges and Opportunities: Our Elucidations!

In the field of phenomenological-existential psychology, challenges and opportunities often emerge as two sides of the same coin, where silence plays an integral role in facilitating the therapeutic process. The dynamics of this therapeutic approach are complex, and silence, when used consciously, can be a powerful tool, but it also presents significant difficulties. On the one hand, creating a silent space allows individuals to connect with their inner experiences and deepest emotions. This state of stillness fosters reflection and self-exploration, encouraging patients to confront issues that might otherwise remain hidden in the superficiality of everyday life.

However, implementing this silence is not without its obstacles. Many patients may feel uncomfortable or anxious when faced with prolonged periods of silence, interpreting them as a lack of support or guidance. This reaction is understandable, given that contemporary culture values verbal communication as the primary means of interaction and understanding. Herein lies the opportunity: through proper training, therapists can learn to better contextualize these moments of silence, transforming them into pedagogies of deep listening. Phenomenological-existential psychology, in this context, can offer a new language for interpreting these experiences, allowing patients to see silence not as a vacuum but as a space of resonance, where their inner voices can finally emerge.

We also believe that therapists have the opportunity to use these challenging moments to develop skills in empathy and presence. The shared experience of silence can create a deeper connection between therapist and patient, cultivating an environment where authenticity and vulnerability are not only accepted but encouraged. This coexistence with the challenge of remaining silent fosters critical



reflection on the meaning of communication and emotional expression, allowing both parties to explore the limits and possibilities of what it means to be truly present. Thus, while the challenges of silence are palpable and evident, the opportunities that arise from this struggle are invaluable, enriching both the therapeutic journey and the fundamental human experience.

7. Tangentiating the Research: Proposals!

We understand that research to explore the "Pact of Silence" intertwines phenomenological-existential psychology, focusing on the lived experience of the individuals involved. This method allows for a more in-depth analysis of the meanings attributed to communicative silences in social and interpersonal interactions, emphasizing the subjectivity and interpretation of phenomena. To this end, qualitative procedures should be used, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observations. These strategies aim to foster an environment conducive to participants sharing their experiences, reflecting on the circumstances in which the pact manifests itself.

In our view, the selection of participants should follow specific criteria, prioritizing individuals who experience or witness the pact in various contexts, such as family, professional, and social. Such diversity enriches data collection, enabling a broader range of perspectives. The interviews should be recorded, transcribed and subsequently analyzed using techniques such as content analysis, which allows for the identification of recurring patterns and themes, as well as significant interpretative nuances; Giorgi's phenomenological-psychological method, which has made a major contribution to phenomenological research, among others. Data triangulation, carried out by comparing participants' statements and field observations, strengthens the validity of the findings and allows for a more robust understanding of the phenomenon.

Another relevant aspect of the research is the reflexivity of the researcher, who is committed to recognizing his or her own predispositions and interpretations in the analysis process. This self-assessment is critical to the integrity of the



research, since existential phenomenology emphasizes the importance of subjective understanding in the construction of knowledge. The emerging results aim not only to reveal the particularities of the pact, but also to provoke critical reflection on how these dynamics of silence affect contemporary human relations. In sum, the proposed methodology provides a solid foundation for understanding the pact as a meaningful phenomenon, complex and multifaceted in nature, prompting a closer look at the intersubjective relations that permeate everyday life.

The exploration of the “Pact of Silence” through empirical studies reveals intricate dynamics between individual existential experiences and broader social implications. Central to our findings is the recognition that silence, often perceived as a mere absence of sound, embodies deep psychological nuances that deserve to be examined. The data indicate that individuals engaged in the pact often experience a complex interplay of conformity and resistance, in which silence becomes a vehicle for personal agency as well as social conformity. Thematic analysis of participants’ narratives highlights a diverse spectrum of motivations that underpin the decision to maintain or break this silence, revealing factors such as fear of ostracism, cultural expectations, and the struggle for authenticity.

We situate these findings within the context of phenomenological-existential psychology, emphasizing the importance of lived experiences in shaping individual responses to the pact. The narratives not only illuminate the emotional ramifications of silence—such as feelings of isolation and relief, vulnerability and empowerment—but also highlight the collective dimensions of these experiences. As participants navigate their silences, the interplay between personal autonomy and social constructions emerge as central, suggesting that the pact is not just an individual phenomenon but also a collective experience rooted in shared cultural narratives. This recognition invites a reassessment of silence in psychological discourse, positioning it not simply as an absence of communication but rather as a complex act of expression that influences identity formation and interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, the implications of these findings extend to therapeutic practice, suggesting that practitioners should consider the nuances of silence in their



approaches. By understanding how silence operates as both a protective factor and a barrier to authentic communication, therapists can better navigate the delicate landscape of clients' experiences. This dialogue, therefore, serves to enrich the therapeutic process, allowing for deeper exploration of how silence shapes not only individual psyches but also collective realities defined by shared cultural experiences. In sum, our results resonate with the central themes of the study, illustrating that the "Pact of Silence" extends beyond the personal realm, impacting social interactions and therapeutic engagements in profoundly meaningful ways.

8. Ethical Implications of the Pact of Silence

The "Pact of Silence" in the context of phenomenological-existential psychology raises complex ethical issues that intertwine with the clinical practice and moral obligations of the psychologist. This approach, by prioritizing subjectivity and individual experience, enriches clinical understanding, but also requires significant ethical care in the management of information shared by the client. Thus, the responsibility of the psychologist becomes even more pressing, as he or she must balance the need to understand the individuality of the patient with the imperative of protecting his or her privacy. The role of the psychologist includes not only facilitating the therapeutic process, but also monitoring how internal discussions - which by nature may involve human frailties and vulnerabilities - should be handled with respect.

In this context, confidentiality emerges as one of the fundamental pillars that support the therapeutic relationship. Breaking the pact of silence, whether by necessity or error, not only compromises the trust between therapist and client, but can also lead to harmful consequences for the emotional and mental integrity of the individual. Therefore, the ethics that accompany this practice are not limited to respect for privacy, but expand to considerations about the impact of words and actions on the therapeutic process. At the same time, psychologists must be aware of the ethical exceptions in which confidentiality may be challenged, for example, in



situations involving imminent risk to the life of the client or third parties, where intervention may be more urgent than the protection of silence.

Considering the ethical implications of the pact of silence proves to be fundamental, not only for the effectiveness of therapy, but also for the integrity of the profession. In this sense, a deep ethical commitment must be cultivated, where the understanding of the client's experience is carried out in a safe and confidential environment, thus promoting a solid foundation for the exploration of the self and personal meaning. This ethical care, therefore, not only equates clinical practice with the social responsibility of psychology, but also consolidates the transformative impact of phenomenological-existential treatment for the benefit of human well-being.

8.1. Psychologist's Responsibility: Our Understanding!

The psychologist's responsibility in the context of the pact of silence is multifaceted and requires a deep understanding of both the ethical dimensions and professional practices. This ethical commitment guides the psychologist's actions, who must always prioritize the client's well-being, even in circumstances where the need to maintain confidentiality may conflict with legal obligations or the need to protect third parties. In this sense, professional ethics not only outline the contours of clinical practice, but also require constant reflection on the implications of each act performed in the office.

It is imperative that the psychologist be aware that responsibility involves not only respecting the pact of silence, but also being clear about its limitations. Silence may be desirable in situations where the client's freedom of expression and vulnerability need to be protected, but the indiscriminate application of this pact may lead to undesirable consequences. The professional must assess whether silence may perpetuate risky situations, both for the client and for other people. This ethical dilemma requires psychologists to be able to discern when maintaining confidentiality is essential and when it is necessary to act in defense of the general safety and well-being.



In addition to considering the immediate implications of their choices, psychologists must adopt a proactive stance in promoting a therapeutic environment that values transparency and trust. This includes communicating clearly about the conditions that involve the pact of silence, emphasizing that certain limits may exist. Ongoing education and professional supervision are essential to support psychologists in their decisions, ensuring that they maintain ethical practice that reflects both individual and social responsibility. Thus, the ethical action of psychologists is not limited to compliance with standards, but expands to a broader commitment to the repercussions that their actions will have on the lives and integrity of those involved.

8.2. Confidentiality Issues: Our Perspective!

Confidentiality is one of the fundamental pillars in the practice of psychology, especially within the context of the Pact of Silence, which reaffirms the professional's commitment to protecting the client's privacy. This principle not only sustains trust in the therapeutic relationship, but is also an ethical and legal requirement, reflecting deep respect for the individual's autonomy. In this context, confidentiality addresses not only the information directly shared by the client, but also the emotional and psychological context in which this information is inserted. The psychologist must always be aware that the unauthorized disclosure of personal data or experiences can cause significant and irreparable harm to the client.

The limits of confidentiality, however, present nuances that deserve attention. There are circumstances in which the professional is legally or ethically obliged to break this confidentiality, such as in cases of imminent danger to the client or third parties, or in situations of abuse or neglect. Clarity about these limits must be established from the first interactions, ensuring that the client understands the scope and restrictions of confidentiality. Therefore, open communication about these issues is essential, not only to ensure the client's safety, but also to preserve the integrity of the therapeutic process. This careful analysis and respect for the nuances of confidentiality are essential for the proper practice of phenomenological-



existential psychology, which promotes a rich and contextualized understanding of the human being in its entirety.

We also recognize that in the era of digitalization and instant communication, issues related to confidentiality face new challenges. Adequate protections must be implemented to ensure the security of electronic records and other sensitive data. Professional ethics require that the psychologist be constantly updated on best practices to protect the privacy and integrity of information, considering not only legal requirements, but also the ethical expectations of society. This includes the responsible handling of information in supervision and training contexts, where the Pact of Silence takes on new meaning, since the aim is to create a safe and constructive environment for reflection and learning, without compromising the client's confidentiality. A thorough understanding of confidentiality issues, therefore, is not only a legal responsibility, but an act of care and respect for the unique experience of each individual who enters the office.

9. Silence in Culture and Society: possible overlaps!

Silence, as a multifaceted phenomenon, permeates various facets of culture and society, revealing itself in human interactions, artistic expressions and collective beliefs. In various cultural traditions, silence is invested with profound meanings, often addressing issues of respect, contemplation and spiritual revelation. For example, in Buddhism, silence is seen as a means of meditation and introspection, allowing practitioners to reach spaces of inner peace and self-understanding. Likewise, in many indigenous traditions, silence is used as a tool of wisdom, where listening becomes a practice as valued as speaking, highlighting the harmony between the individual and nature (Castro, 2023).

In the broader context of society, silence can function both as an agent of cohesion and as a factor of exclusion. In societies where speech is a powerful social asset, silence is often seen as a form of oppression or resistance. During times of crisis or censorship, the act of silencing voices can be both a reflection of fear and a mechanism of social control. Conversely, in communities where attentive listening



is valued, silence can facilitate the building of community bonds, providing a safe space for sharing experiences and feelings. Such dynamics are particularly evident in contexts of intercultural dialogue, where silence serves as a space for mutual reflection and the building of understanding between different social groups (Meira et al., 2024). It is important to understand that artistic expressions often incorporate silence as a form of communication. In music, for example, the silence between notes can accentuate the emotion and intensity of the composition. In film and theater, carefully placed pauses can create dramatic tension or offer the viewer a moment to reflect on what has been presented. Literature also uses silence to convey underlying meanings, allowing readers to interpret the unsaid as a crucial element of the narrative. Thus, silence reveals itself not only as the absence of sound, but as a powerful cultural tool that shapes the way society expresses itself, relates and understands itself (Castro, 2025).

9.1. Cultural Representations

As cultural artifacts, representations are an essential vehicle through which societies communicate and reflect their collective identities, beliefs, and values. Within the context of phenomenological-existential psychology, the concept of representation becomes particularly relevant when examining how cultural narratives shape individual experiences of silence. These representations often manifest themselves in the form of art, literature, and traditions, serving as mirrors and shapers of the social fabric. The meaning of silence, embodied in these expressions, prompts exploration of how absence—often perceived as emptiness—can carry profound meaning, conveying nuances of emotion and thought that spoken language may not encapsulate (Hall et al., 2024).

In various cultural contexts, silence can symbolize a multitude of responses—reflection, contemplation, mourning, or even resistance. Artistic expressions, such as literature or visual arts, can utilize silence to evoke deeper understandings of human existence, transcending the limitations of verbal communication. For example, in certain Eastern philosophies, silence can represent enlightenment or a



state of harmony with the universe, while in Western traditions, it can signify oppression or the need to give voice to marginalized narratives. These dualities illustrate how cultural representations act not only as guardians of heritage but also as dynamic spaces where individuals negotiate their identities in relation to larger social dialogues (Eriksson & Ågerfalk, 2022).

Examining silence through a phenomenological lens allows for a richer understanding of how individuals internalize and express their own experiences within these cultural frameworks. Cultural representations of silence invite individuals to engage in an introspective journey, unraveling the layers of personal and collective silence embedded in their stories. As individuals navigate these meanings, they contribute to the ongoing evolution of cultural narratives, reinforcing or challenging existing representations. Through this interaction, silence emerges not as an absence but as a potent and multifaceted element within cultural discourse—one capable of fostering understanding, connection, and even transformation in the face of existential concerns. Consequently, the intersections of cultural representation and the notion of silence offer fertile ground for understanding the complexities of human experience, enriching both psychological inquiry and artistic expression.

9.2. Silence in Different Cultures

Silence, as a social and psychological phenomenon, takes on distinct dimensions in different cultures around the world, being shaped by specific traditions, values, and historical contexts. In many Western societies, silence is often seen as a sign of discomfort or lack of communication, reflecting the emphasis on verbal expression. In contrast, Eastern cultures, such as Japanese and Chinese, tend to value silence as a form of respect and contemplation. In these contexts, silence can indicate attentive listening and a form of understanding that transcends words. Nonverbal communication, in turn, gains prominence, and silence becomes an essential means of social harmony and avoiding conflict (Simão, 2025).



In indigenous cultures, silence has a profoundly spiritual and philosophical function. For many of these societies, moments of silence are seen as opportunities for meditation, intellection, and connection with nature. This behavior reflects the collective responsibility to respect the space and feelings of others, promoting a culture of reflection before action. In some African cultures, silence can have ritual value, used in ceremonies and decision-making processes, symbolizing wisdom and prudence. The absence of words is often an indication of preparation for meaningful communication, where verbal content is only introduced after a period of contemplation (Saldanha, 2023).

Thus, the variability of silence reveals not only differences in communication, but also nuances in interpersonal and social relationships. This indicates that silence is not just the absence of sound, but a context full of meaning (Machado, 2023). The way silence is interpreted and used varies according to the cultural context, shaping the social and emotional dynamics surrounding human communication. Recognizing these differences is fundamental to a richer and more respectful intercultural understanding, promoting deeper and more meaningful dialogues in interactions between different cultures. Therefore, silence reveals itself as an essential component of the human experience, which, instead of being merely a void, is a space where the most complex expressions of our humanity develop (Menezes, 2025).

10. The Role of Silence in Communication

Silence plays a multifaceted role in communication, transcending the mere absence of words and acquiring meaning through the context in which it occurs. It can be understood as a mode of expression that conveys emotions, intentions, and states of mind as powerfully as speech. In the context of phenomenological-existential psychology, silence is not a vacuum or a limitation, but rather an essential form of communication that facilitates introspective and reflective connection between individuals. Thus, it is essential to understand that silence can carry both a dimension of oppression when expression is omitted, and a dimension of freedom



and understanding when used as a space for reflection and self-understanding (Mendonça & Porto, 2021).

The interpretation of silence, in turn, is deeply subjective and depends on contextual, cultural, and individual factors. Silence shared between friends can be interpreted as a sign of comfort and understanding, while in a situation of conflict, it can be seen as a form of hostility or rejection. Furthermore, different cultural traditions attribute different meanings to silence: in some cultures, it is valued as a sign of wisdom or respect, while in others it is considered a sign of weakness or uncertainty. This diversity of interpretations highlights the importance of silence as a dynamic element in communication, which, when well understood, can enrich human interactions. In therapeutic settings, silence is used strategically to create a safe and reflective space, where the individual can explore their deepest emotions without external pressures, facilitating an internal dialogue that can lead to significant and transformative insights (Silva, 2021). Therefore, recognizing the role of silence in communication is essential for both psychological practice and everyday interactions. It should not be seen simply as the absence of speech, but rather as a powerful form of communication, which, if interpreted appropriately, can promote deeper understanding between people. Understanding the nuances of silence allows for the improvement of interpersonal relationships and greater development of self-awareness and empathy, fundamental elements in the harmony of social and psychological life (Guimarães, 2021).

10.2. Interpretation of Silence

The interpretation of silence, especially in the context of Phenomenological-Existential Psychology, is an intricate facet of human communication that deserves in-depth analysis. Silence, far from being merely the absence of words, carries profound meanings and can be interpreted in a variety of ways, reflecting not only the emotional state of the communicator but also the social and relational context in which it occurs. This approach is based on the idea that silence can express feelings of discomfort, reflection, resistance or, on the other hand, loneliness, and these



nuances should be considered in clinical practice and in everyday interactions (Araújo et al., 2021).

The interpretation of silence implies active listening and a genuine presence of the interlocutor, allowing emotions and implicit meanings to emerge naturally (Castro et al., 2025). Within existential psychology, silence can be a vehicle for self-knowledge, a space where the individual faces their internal doubts and anxieties. The therapist, by recognizing the importance of silence, plays a fundamental role in providing a safe environment that encourages the patient to explore these feelings without the immediate need for verbalization. This process can be transformative, as it allows the individual to reach a deeper level of awareness and understanding of themselves. (Formigosa, 2022).

The interpretation of silence must also be sensitive to cultural and interactive contexts, as it varies significantly between different societies and groups. What is considered comfortable silence in one culture may be seen as discouraging in another. Thus, the ability to discern these nuances is essential for any effective communication practice, especially in therapeutic settings, where the therapist must be attentive not only to the words spoken, but also to what remains unsaid. Therefore, understanding silence transcends simply "not saying", being an essential activity to decipher the layers of meaning that make up the human experience, enabling a fertile space for personal growth and the construction of more authentic connections between individuals.

Final Thoughts or the Possibility of Future Understandings!

The exploration of the "Pact of Silence" through the phenomenological-existential lens illuminates critical intersections between silence, identity, and the human condition. This discourse reveals how silence can often embody complex layers of meaning, encompassing both the absence of voice and a profound invitation to introspection. In the context of existential psychology, silence becomes a space where individuals confront their authentic selves, dealing with their existential realities and the social structures that shape their experiences. Through



therapy, the clinician can guide clients to navigate this silent terrain, encouraging them to articulate their inner conflicts and dismantling the oppressive silence that may have stifled their self-expression.

The synthesis of the phenomenological and existential perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the implications of the “Pact of Silence.” It recognizes that silence is not merely absence, but a vital communicative space, filled with the potential for transformation and healing. In therapeutic settings, the Pact of Silence encourages practitioners to cultivate an environment that honors silence as a multifaceted phenomenon, where clients can feel safe exploring the depths of their emotions without fear of judgment. This invites a nuanced therapeutic approach that respects the client’s pace of revealing their truths. In doing so, therapists can facilitate authentic dialogue that connects internal experiences with external realities, paving the way for liberation from the constraints imposed by social norms. Ultimately, the discourse surrounding the “Pact of Silence” reinforces the importance of embracing existential dilemmas in psychological practice. It recognizes silence as a powerful tool that reflects the struggle for identity, meaning, and connection in an often chaotic world. In this way, fostering awareness of the complexities surrounding silence in therapeutic settings not only enhances understanding of clients’ lived experiences, but also enriches the therapeutic relationship itself. Through this lens, silence transforms from a barrier to a catalyst for growth, guiding individuals toward greater understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Mindfully engaging with silence can ultimately lead to a deeper experience of existence, where clients learn to articulate their truths and reclaim their voices in the narratives of their lives.

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