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Does Organizational Trust Influence Voice Behaviour? Sharing Malaysian Public Sector Experiences

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Abstract

Despite attention to employee voice behaviour, limited research has examined organisational trust as a multidimensional construct comprising trust in organisation, leader and supervisor within the Malaysian public sector. This study examines the relationship between these three dimensions of organisational trust and employee voice behaviour among public sector employees in Malaysia. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory, organisational trust is conceptualised as a cognitive factor influencing employees'willingness to express ideas, suggestions, concern, and opinions. Data were collected from 372 employees across federal public organisations in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, and analysed using SPSS 29 and SmartPLS 4. The findings demonstrate that organisational trust dimensions are associated with employee voice behaviour, highlighting the importance of trust in organisation, leader and supervisor in encouraging voice. The findings extend Social Cognitive Theory by demonstrating that trust related cogniitve perceptions contribute to employee voice behaviour within the hierarchical and high context Malaysian public sector. Practically, strengthening organisational trust through transparent practices, trustworthy leadership, supportive supervisory relationship, integrity and accountability can foster participation and constructive communication, supporting governance and service delivery in line with federal public organisations' goals. Ministries, policymakers, organisations, and human resource practitioners are therefore encouraged to strengthen organisational trust to promote employee voice behaviour.

Keyword: Voice Behaviour, Trust in Organization, Trust in Leader, Trust in Supervisor, Public Sector

Introduction

Employee voice behaviour refer to informal and discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, problems, or opinions about work related issues, with the intent to

bring about improvement or change (Morrison, 2023). However, employees may reluctant to speak up when expressing their views is perceived as risky, particularly when opinions challenge existing practices, decision, or authority. Therefore, understanding factors that encourage employees to express their views remains important in organisational behaviour research

Organisational trust is important because it shaped employees' perceptions of whether the organisational environment is supportive and whether their views will be received appropriately. When employee perceive high trust in the organisation and its representatives, they may feel more secure and confident in expressing opinions. In contrast, limited trust may increase uncertainty about how their voice will be received and reduce willingness to speak up.

In this study, organisational trust is examined through three dimensions which is trust in organisation, trust in leader and trust in supervisor. These dimensions capture employees' perception of reliability, fairness, support and appropriate treatment from these organisational actors. Organisational trust is particularly relevant to voice behaviour because speaking up involves interpersonal and professional risk. Trust can therefore influence employees' confidence in communicating concerns and suggestions within the workplace, openly and constructively about organisational issues at work. When employees perceive these parties as trustworthy, they may develop favourable expectations regarding the outcomes of expressing their views. Empirical evidence supports this relationship. Liu et al (2022) found that organisational trust was positively associated with employee voice behaviour in China, While Zhang et al. (2024) reported that organisational trust significantly predicted voice behaviour among neonatal intensive care nurses. In Malaysia, Nazia and Zaiton (2021) also found a significant relationship between organisational trust and employee voice behaviour.

Despite these findings, further examination is warranted within the Malaysian federal public sector. Existing Malaysian evidence has provided insights into organisational trust and employee voice, but limited attention has been given to this relationship among federal public sector employees. This context is particularly relevant because Malaysian public sector organisations operate within hierarchical administrative settings in which power distance, authority and control remain important features of organisational relationships. Evidence from the Malaysian public sector indicates that power distance shapes the relationship between top management and subordinates (Ibrahim et al., 2021), while research across Malaysian local authorities identifies centralised and top-down approaches associated with hierarchy, control and top-down supervision (Hughes et al., 2023). In such contexts, hierarchical relationships may be relevant to how employees assess the appropriateness of expressing opinions, suggestions or concerns to organisational members in positions of authority.

This study is underpinned by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) developed by Bandura (1986), which explains human behaviour through reciprocal interaction between enviromental, cognitive, and behavioural factors. Organisational trust is conceptualised as a cognitive factor because it reflects employees' perceptions, evaluations, and expectations regarding the trustworthiness of the organisational and organisational actors. When employees perceive

the organisation, leader and supervisor as trustworthy, they may form positive expectation about speaking up and perceive lower risks associated with expressing their views. Conversely, low trust may lead employees to anticipate negative responses and become reluctant to speak up. Thus, Social Cognitive Theory explains how cognitive perceptions of trust can shape behavioural willingness to engage in voice behaviour. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between the three dimensions of organisational trust and employee voice behaviour in the Malaysian federal public sector, providing empirical evidence from a formal and hierarchical public sector context.

Literature Review

Employee voice

Employee voice behaviour represents an important form of employee participation through which individuals communicate ideas, information, and viewpoints that may contribute to organisational functioning and change. Rather than being limited to formal communication channels, voice reflects employees' willingness to actively contribute their knowledge and observations to workplace processes (Morrison, 2023). This behaviour is particularly valuable because employees are often positioned close to operational activities and may possess information about problems, inefficiencies, and opportunities that are not immediately visible to managers. Consequently, employee voice can serve as an important mechanism for organisations to identify issues and support continuous improvement.

Employee voice is also recognises as a multidimensional behaviour rather than a single form of communication. Liang et al. (2012) distinguished voice into promotive and prohibitive dimensions. Promotive voice involves expressing suggestions or ideas intended to improve existing practices, whereas prohibitive voice involves communicating concerns about practices, incidents, or behaviours that could potentially harm the organisation. This distinction indicates that employees may speak up for different purposes, ranging from proposing constructive improvements to preventing undesirable outcomes.

Importantly, the occurrence of voice behaviour is not determined solely by whether employees possess useful ideas or information. Employees must also make an individual judgement about whether speaking up is appropriate and worthwhile within their work environment. The decision to voice may therefore depend on employees' perceptions of their relationship with the organisation and relevant workplace actors, as well as their confidence that their views will be received constructively. Recent research further indicates that voice may generate both organisational benefits and interpersonal consequence, as employees who frequently speak up can sometimes be perceived negatively by colleagues (Zhang et al., 2022). Thus, employee voice should be understood as a behavioural process involving the expression of work related views, the employees' assessment of the surrounding environment, and the potential consequences of speaking up. This perspective highlights the importance of examining the organisational and individual conditions that encourage employees to transform their knowledge and opinions into actual voice behaviour.

Organisational trust

Organisational trust refers to a critical psychological factor in explaining employees' behaviour towards others within an organiation (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). It reflects employees' cognitive assessment of the extent to which they can rely on and have confidence in

organisational actors within the workplace. Organisational trust can be conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comparing three dimensions, namely trust in organization, trust in leader and trust in supervisor (Pillai et al. 1999). These dimensions represent different targets of employees' trust and therefore provide a more comprehensive understanding of how trust may influence employees' behavioural responses in the workplace.

Trust in organisation refer to employees' perceptions regarding the organisation's ability to cope with external threats, achieve its goals, and manage human resources effectively. In contrast, trust in leader concerns employees' trust in their leaders as individuas who are capable of making appropriate decisions, allocating resources, and taking responsibility for and supporting organisational success. Trust in the supervisor reflects employees' personal trust, whereby employees perceive their supervisors as trustworthy in managing subordinates fairly and contributing to organisational effectiveness (Galford & Drapeau, 2003). Although these dimensions are related, previous research has distinguished trust according to different referents, including the organisation, leader and supervisor (Varga et al., 2023). This distinction is particularly relevant to employee voice behaviour because employees' willingness to express ideas, concerns, or suggestions may depend on whom they perceive as trustworthy within the organisation.

Within organisations, trust encourges individuals to become more willing to engage in behaviours that involve risk, such as employee voice behaviour (Colquitt et al., 2007). From a cognitive perspective, trust functions as an internal evaluation process through which employees essess whether expressing their views is likely to be accepted and whether the relevant organisational actors can be relied upon. Thus, organisational trust may serve as a cognitive element that encourages employee to overcomes the perceived risks associated with speaking up. However, previous research remains limited in examining organisational trust comprehensively according to its three dimensions, namely trust in organisation, trust in leader and trust in supervisor, particularly within high context cultural settings. Examining these dimensions separately therefore provides a clearer understanding of how different sources of trust shape employees' cognitive evaluations and subsequently encourage employee voice behaviour within the organisation.

The Relationship between organisational trust (Trust in organisation) and Employee Voice

Employee voice behaviour is often perceived as a risky action, particularly in highly hierarchical organisations, because it may challenge the status quo (Ilyas et al., 2021). From a cognitive perspective, psychological safety encourages employees to speak up because they are more likely to express their views when they feel safe and less concerned about negative consequences (Fatoki, 2024). In this context, trust in organisation serves as an important source of psychological safety by reducing concerns about the risks of speaking up. Trust in organisation refers to employees'confidence that the organisational will fulfill its promises, act fairly, and avoid mistreatment (Mayer et al., 1995). Prouska et al. (2022), covering the United States, Thailand, and Nigeria, found that organisational trust was associated with employees' willingness to voice their views. Similarly, Berg et al. (2022) in the United States found a positive relationship between organisational trust and employee voice, consistent with earlier findings by Unler and Caliskan (2019) and Nikolaou et al. (2011). Evidence from China also indicates a significant positive relationship between trust in organisation and employee voice behaviour (Hao & Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). This

relationship may occur because trust strengthens perceptions that the organisation is fair, transparent, supportive, and safe, increasing employees' confidence to engage in socially and professionally risky behaviour such as speaking up (Morrison, 2023). Therefore, higher trust in the organisation is expected to increase employees' willingness to engage in employee voice behaviour within the organisation and contribute to constructive organisational change. Based on the foregoing discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H1: Trust in organisation is positively related to employee voice behaviour

The Relationship between organisational trust (Trust in leader) and Employee Voice
Trust in leaders refers to a social relationship in which employees perceive their leaders as extending beyond economic interests (Whitener et al., 1998). Previous research suggests that trust is an antecedent of employee voice because it reduces interpersonal risk, consistent with the risk taking perspective (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Morrison (2023) explains that employees are more willing to express ideas when trust exists in the employee-leader relationship.

Evidence from western context supports this relationship. González-Cánovas et al. (2024) found in spain that trust in leaders was associated with employees' willingness to commit to the organisation, including voice behaviour, because trust strengthens perceptions of fairness and reduce risks. Similarly, Silva et al. (2024) in Portugal found that trust in leader contributed to the relationship between paradoxical leadership and promotive voice by reducing perceptions of negative consequences.

Asian study provide support. For instance, in China found that trust in leader promotes psychological safety, encouraging employees to speak up (Du, 2024). Similarly, in Malaysia, Nazia and Zaiton (2021) reported a positive relationship between trust in leaders and employee voice. Furthermore, Hassan et al. (2025) in Pakistan found that trust in leader encouraged constructive voice. While Duan et al. (2019) showed that trustworthy leaders influenced employee voice when perceived risks were low, further evidence from Hosseini and Ferreira (2023) indicate that trust in leader encouraged more frequent voice behaviour. These findings indicate that trust in leader can reduce interpersonal risks and strengthen employees' willingness to speak up. Therefore, hypothesis is proposed:
H2: Trust in leader is positively related to employee voice behaviour

The Relationship between organisational trust (Trust in supervisor) and Employee Voice
Trust in supervisor refers to employees' confidence in their supervisor (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). It create a sense of security and confidence that encourages employees to share information (Dedahanov & Rhee, 2015). Moreover, trust in supervisor fosters psychological safety, which encourages employees to speak up (Badru et al., 2024). From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), trust in superviosr represents a cognitive factor that can influence employees' behavioural decisions.

Recent empirical evidence supports this relationship. Badru et al. (2024) in Nigeria found that trust in supervisor positively influenced the relationship between high performance work systems. Stewardship climate, and employee voice. Trust in supervisor increase employees' confidence that their voices will be heard and valued, while reducing fear of negative consequences. Similarly, Huang et al. (2023) in China found a positive relationship between

trust in supervisor and employee voice, indicating that higher trust increases employees' willingness to speak up. These findings are consistent with Son (2019) in Korea and Fayzullaev et al. (2020) in Uzbekistan, who also reported positive relationships between trust in supervisor and employee voice. In Malaysia, Kim et al. (2024) found that trust in supervisor positively contributed to open communication and employee voice by strengthening employees' perceptions that supervisors were fair and protective.

Further evidence from Dedahanov et al. (2022) in Korea showed that employees who trusted their supervisor were more likely to express ideas and concerns because they perceived lower risks of punishment or discrimination. Hassan et al. (2019) in the United States similarly found that trust in supervisor reduced employee silence by encouraging employees to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as speaking up. These findings suggest that trust in supervisor can encourage employees to express their ideas and concerns by reducing the perceived interpersonal risks associated with speaking up. Therefore, Hypothesis is proposed:
H3: Trust in supervisor is positively related to employee voice behaviour

Research Framework
Figure 1 presents the research framework develop to examine the relationship between organisational trust and employee voice behaviour. Organisational trust is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising trust in organisation, trust in leader, and trust in supervisor, with employee voice behaviour as the dependent variables.

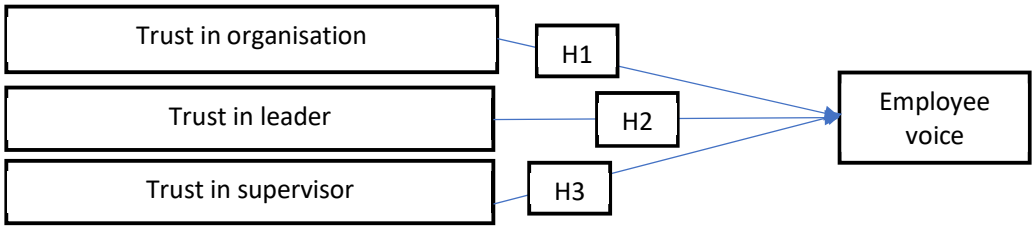

Figure 1 The relationship between organisational trust and employee voice behaviour

Methodology
Research Design and Study Sample
This study adopted a quantitative approach using a questionnaire survey, as recommended by Creswell (2023), to examine the relationship between organisational trust and employee voice behaviour. Organisational trust was conceptualised as a multidimensional organisational factor consisting of three dimensions which is trust in organisation, trust in leader and trust in supervisor, while employee voice behaviour was examined as the dependent variable. The structured questionnaire was administered through both online and physical distribution methods to facilitate the completion of all questionnaire items.

Participants were recruited using a stratified probability sampling procedure. Based on the G-Power 3.1 calculation, a minimum sample size of 114 respondents was required. However, the study succesfully obtained responses from 327 employees across twelve federal goverment agencies in Kuching, Sarawak, providing an adequate basis for examining the proposed research model. Given the nature of the research model and the multiple relationships between organisational trust and employee voice behaviour, Partial Least

Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed as the primary analytical technique. The approach is appropriate for examining complex research models involving multiple relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Following the PLS-SEM procedure, bootstrapping analysis was conducted to assess the measurement model, including internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2022).

Result and Finding

Internal Consistency Reliability, Covergent Validity and Discriminant Validity Analysis

Table 1 presents the result of the convergent validity assessment for the overall sample (n=372). The findings reveal that most of the indicators obtained outer loading values between 0.585 and 0.893, which meet the acceptable criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2022). However, one indicator, RKpP6_23, was excluded from the measurement model as its outer loading value fell below the minimum treshold of 0.40.

The result further show that the composite reliability (CR) values for all reflective constructs ranged from 0.906 to 0.955, exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). Similarly, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the minimum threshold of 0.50. Collectively, these results confirm that the indicators demonstrate adequate convergent validity and appropriately represent their respective latent variables (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1

Convergent Validity of measurement model (Outer Loading, CR, AVE)

Latent Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	CR	AVE
Trust in Organization	KpO1_8	0.816	0.955	0.575
	KpO2_9	0.872		
	KpO3_10	0.879		
	KpO4_11	0.885		
	KpO6_13	0.667		
Trust in Leader	KpK1_14	0.805	0.906	0.708
	KpK2_15	0.893		
	KpK3_16	0.863		
	KpK4_17	0.802		
Trust in Supervisor	KpP1_18	0.873	0.935	0.742
	KpP2_19	0.855		
	KpP3_20	0.893		
	KpP4_21	0.863		
	KpP5_22	0.820		

Voice Behavior	PB10_33 PB1_24 PB2_25 PB3_26 PB4_27 PB5_28 PB6_29 PB7_30 PB8_31 PB9_32	0.738 0.705 0.806 0.853 0.843 0.847 0.807 0.778 0.660 0.585	0.934	0.588

Note: Items RKpP6_23, deleted. CR = Composite Reliability; AV = Average Variance Extracted. The indicator loadings were significant at 95% confidence level.

Meanwhile, Table 2 reports the discriminant validity result based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. The findings indicates that all HTMT values obtained are lower than the recommended treshold of 0.90. This demonstrates that the latentvariables possess adequate discriminant validity and can be emperically differentiated from one another. Accordingly, the measurement indicators are considerd suitable for representing their respective constructs, confirming the validity of the measurement model (Gold et al., 2001)

Table 2
Discriminant Validity Assessments Of Measurement Model for full sample

Latent Variable	Trust in Organization	Trust in Leader	Trust in Supervisor	Voice Behavior
Trust in Organization	-			
Trust in Leader	0.858	-		
Trust in Supervisor	0.829	0.784	-	
Voice Behavior	0.716	0.678	0.803	-

Note: LV = Latent Variable; *p <.05

Significance Testing and Hypothesis Testing

In PLS-SEM, the significance of each hypothesized relationship is assessed through the bootstrapping procedure. This procedure generates emperical sampling distributions that enable the statistical significance of the estimated path coefficients to be evaluated. The significance parameters provise information regarding the magnitude and direction of the relationships between the variables examined in the study. Using SmartPLS 4, the bootstrapping results are presented in the structural model output, including the path coefficients, t values, p-values, and confidence intervals bias corrected. These statistical results serve as the basis for evaluating whether each proposed hypothesis is supported or rejected, as presented below.

Table 3
Result for Path Coefficient, t value, p value and Confidence Interval

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	Std. Error	t values	p values	BCI LL	BCI UL	VIF	*Effect Size*			
									f2	*Effect Type*	R^2	Result
HI	KpO → PB	0.160	0.069	2.314	<0.05	0.041	0.213	2.927	0.020	Small	0.569	Supported
H2	KpK → PB	0.110	0.063	1.743	<0.05	0.005	0.213	2.556	0.011	Negligible		Supported
H3	KpP→ PB	0.541	0.053	10.241	<0.05	0.449	0.623	2.480	0.274	Medium		Supported

Based on table 3, the analysis results indicate that trust in organisation has a significant effect on voice behaviour (β= 0.160, t= 2.314, p<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis H1 is supported. Based on table 3, the analysis results indicate that trust in leader has a significant effect on voice behavior (β= 0.110, t= 1.743 , p<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis H2 is supported.Based on table 3, the analysis results indicate that trust in supervisor has a significant effect on voice behavior (β= 0.541, t= 10.241 , p<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis H3 is supported.

Discussion

Hypothesis 1: Trust in organisation and voice behavior

Based on the analysis results, the path coefficient for the relationship between trust in organisation and voice behaviour was 0.160. with a t value of 2.314. Therefore, it can be concluded that trust in organisation has a significant relationship with voice behavior. The finding indicates that the greater the level of trust in organisation practiced within the organization, the greater the employees' tendency to engage in voice behavior.

The findings is consistent with Prouska et al. (2022), who reported a positive association between trust in organisation and employee across Western, Asian, and African contexts. Similarly, Berg et al. (2022) found a positive relationship between trust in organisation and employee voice behaviour in the United States. These findings support the view that employees who trust in their organisation are more willing to express ideas and concerns because they perceive lower interpersonal and organisational risks associated with speaking up.

However, the significant relationship identified in the present study may also be understood within the context of the Malaysian federal public sector. Employees in public sector organisations operate within formal administrative structures characterised by established authority, procedures, and hierarchical relationships. In such an enviroment, expressing ideas, concerns, or suggestions may involve perceived risks because employees may need to communicate their views through established lines of authority. Therefore, trust in organisation may provide an important basis for employees to believe that their contributions will be treated fairly, taken seriously, and will not result in adverse consequences. When employees perceive the organisation as trustworthy, they may be more confident that expressing constructive views is compatible with organisational expectation and that their contributions will be valued.

This findings can also be interpreted in relation to the collective and relational orientation often associated with Malaysian organisational contexts. In a setting where maintaining harmonious worplace relationships and respecting authority can be important, employees may be more cautions about expressing views that could be perceived as challenging existing practices or decision. Trust in organisation may therefore reduce such hesitation by strengthening employees' confidence that the organisation will respond to their views appropriately. In this sense, trust in organisation does not merely reflect a favourable evaluation of the organisation, it may also provide employees with the confidence necessary to take the interpersonal risk involved in speaking up.

Thus, the significant relationship found in this study suggests that trust in organisation may be particularly relevant to employee voice in the Malaysian federal public sector, where formal hierarchy and established authority coexist with the need for employees to communicate suggestions and concerns. The findings extends previous evidence by demonstrating that trust in organisation is associated with employee voice within the Malaysian federal public sector context.

Hypothesis 2: Trust in leader and voice behavior

Based on the analysis results, the path coefficient for the relationship between trust in leader and voice behavior was 0.110, with a t value of 1.743. Therefore, it can be concluded that trust in leader has a significant relationship with voice behavior. This finding indicates that the higher the level of trust in leader possessed by employees, the greater their tendency to engage in voice behavior.

The finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that trust in leader provides employees with greater confidence to express ideas and concerns. Morrison (2023) noted that employees are more willing to engage in voice behaviour when trust exists in the employee-leader relationship. Similarly, Du (2024) found that trust in leaders fosters psychological safety, which enhances employees' confidence and willingness to speak up. Evidence form Malaysia by Nazia and Zaiton (2021) also demonstrated a positive relationship between trust in leader and employee voice behaviour. Taken together, these findings suggest that trust in leader may reduce employees' perceived interpersonal risks and provide greater confidence to express their views.

The significant relationship found in the present study may be particularly relevant to the Malaysian federal public sector context, where leaders occupy formal positions of authority and have an important role in directing employees'work and making decisions. In such a hierarchical enviroment, employees may be cautious about expressing ideas or concerns that differ from those of their superiors because speaking up can potentially be perceived as challenging existing decision or practices. Therefore, when employees trust their leaders, they may perceive that their leaders will respond to their views fairly and constructively, thereby reducing their concerns about negative interpersonal consequences.

Trust in leader may also be important because leaders represent a direct point of interaction between employees and the organisation. Employees frequently rely on leaders to interpret organisational decision, allocate responsibilities, respond to concerns and provide support in their work. When employees perceive their leaders as trustworthy, they may feel more

confident that expressing suggestions or concerns will not jeopardise their working relationships or standing within the organisation. Consequently, trust in leader can create a relational condition in which employees feel sufficiently confident to take the interpersonal risk associated with speaking up.

This interpretation is particularly relevant to the Malaysian federal public sector because employee voice needs to occur alongside respect for formal authority and established administrative procedures. Rather than viewing voice as opposition to authority, employees who trust in leaders may perceive speaking up as constructive contribution to organisational improvement. Thus, the significant relationship identified in this study suggests that trust in leader may provide employees with the relational confidence necessary to communicate ideas and concerns within a formal hierarchical setting.

Hypothesis 3: Trust in supervisor and voice behavior

Based on the analysis results, the path coefficient for the relationship between trust in supervisor and voice behaviour was 0.541, with a t value of 10.241. Therefore, it can be concluded that trust in supervisor has a significant relationship with voice behavior. The finding indicates that the greater the level of trust in supervisor practiced within the organization, the greater the employees' tendency to engage in voice behavior.

The finding is consistent with previous research showing that trust in supervisors can encourage employees to express their ideas and concerns. For example, Huang et al. (2023), found a positive relationship between trust in supervisors and employee voice behaviour in China. Similarly, Dedahanov et al. (2022) found that employees who trusted their supervisors perceived lower risks of negative consequences, such as punishment or discrimination, when expressing their views. These findings suggest that trust in supervisors can reduce employees' perceived interpersonal risks and increase their confidence to speak up.

The relatively strong relationship identified in the present study may be explained by the direct role of supervisors in employees' daily work experiences within the Malaysian federal public sector. Unlike trust in organisation, which represents employees' broader perceptions of the organisation, trust in supervisor is developed through employees' direct and repeated interactions with their immediate supervisors. Supervisors are involved in assigning tasks, providing guidance, evaluating work performance, responding to concerns, and managing employees in their daily work. Therefore, employees may rely heavily on their perceptions of their supervisors when deciding whether it is safe and appropriate to express ideas, concerns, or suggestions.

This relationship may be particularly important in the Malaysian federal public sector context because employees operate within formal hierarchical structures in which supervisors have legitimate authority over subordinates. In such an enviroment, employees may be cautious about expressing views that differ from those of their supervisors because doing so may be perceived as challenging authority or existing practices. When, employees trust their supervisors, however, they may perceive that their views will be received fairly and constructively. This trust can therefore reduce hesitation and provide employees with the confidence to communicate their ideas and concerns despite the presence of formal authority.

The strong relationship may also reflect the supervisor's role as the immediate organisational representative experienced by employees. A supervisor who is perceived as fair, supportive and trustworthy can create a relational enviroment in which employees feel that speaking up will not damage their working relationship or result in negative treatment. Consequently, employees may be more willing to take the interpersonal risks associated with voice behaviour. In this sense, trust in supervisor may function as an important relational basis that enables employees to exercise voice within a formal and hierarchical public sector setting.

Therefore, the findings suggest that trust in supervisor is particularly relevant to understanding employee voice among federal public sector employees in Malaysia. The result extends previous research by showing that employees' direct trust in supervisor is strongly associated with their willingness to express ideas and concerns within the Malaysian federal public sector context.

Implications

The finding of this study indicate that trust in organisation, leader and supervisors has a positive relationship with employee voice behaviour. This finding has implications for Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) by demonstrating that trust formed through social interactions within organisations can function as a cognitive appraisal mechanism that influences employees' propensity to engage in voice behaviour. Although Social Cognitive Theory emphasises the role of cognitive factors in influencing behaviour, the findings of this study extend this understanding by demonstrating that trust in organisation, leader and supervisors, which develops through employees' experiences and social interactions, also constitutes an important cognitive element that encourages employees to express their views and concerns. Thus, this study extend the application of Social Cognitive Theory in explaining employee voice behaviour by emphasising the relationship between social experiences, cognitive appraisal and employee action.

The findings also contribute to the theoritical literature on employee voice behaviour by demonstrating that interpersonal relationships with authorities represent an important pathway in the development of employee voice behaviour. In the context of the Malaysian federal public sector, which is characterised by hierarchical and formal stuctures, employees need to interpret social cues and the acceptance of those in positions of authority before taking action to express their views. Therefore, trust in organisation, leader and supervisors not only reflects the quality of interpersonal relationship but also serves as a cognitive foundation that helps employees develop the confidence to communicate openly. The findings further strengthen empirical evidence that Social Cognitve Theory can be applied to understand employee voice behaviour within Malaysian public sector organisations.

From the perspective of organisations and human resource practitioners, the findings indicate that building trust based relationship between authorities and employees should be given attention in efforts to encourage employee voice behaviour. This is important because employees in hierarchical organisations such as the public sector, commonly considers the acceptance and feedback of those in positions of authority before expressing their views. Therefore, organisations can strengthen authorities competencies through training that emphasises active listening skills, two way communication and effective feedback delivery. Such practices have the potential to foster more open and trust based working relationship,

thereby providing employees with greater confidence to communicate their ideas, views and concern to their authorities.

Human resource practitioners may also consider interpersonal relationship development approaches, such as mentoring, coaching anf career counselling, to encourage closer interactions between employees and authorities. In the context of the Malaysian public sector, which has hierarchical and formal structures, such approaches can serve as supportive mechanisms that help reduce communication gaps between employees and authorities without undermining the organisational authority structure. More positive interpersonal relationships can create a more supportive work enviroment, thereby potentially enhancing employees' confidence to share their views, raise concerns and suggest organisational improvements.

Limitations and Future Researach

This study has several limitations that should be consider when interpreting its findings. First, the study examined organisational trust specifically in relation to employee voice behaviour as the outcome variable within the proposed research framework. Although organisational trust in an important factor in explaining employees' willingness to engage in voice behaviour, the study did not examine other potential determinants that may also contribute to employees' voice behaviour such as promotive and prohibitive voice. Consequently, the findings provide an understanding of the role of organisational trust in explaining employee voice behaviour but do not represent a comprehensive explanation of all factors that may influence such behaviour. Future studies could therefore incorporate other relevant organisational, individual or contextual factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of eemployee voice behaviour.

Second, this study focused on employee voice behaviour as the behavioural outcome and did not examine the consequences that may occur after employees engage in voice behaviour. Voice behaviour may potentially generate subsequent outcomes for employees and organisations, such as organisational improvement, work related responses, employee attitudes or changes in organisational practices. However, these subsequent effects were beyond the scope of the study. Therefore, future research could extend the current research framework by examining the consequences of employee voice behaviour and assessing whether employees' voice behaviour subsequently contributes to organisational or employee related outcomes.

Third, the scope of the study was limited to federal public sector employees in Sarawak, Malaysia, which represents a public sector context characterised by formal hierarchy, relatively high power distance, and collectivist social values. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalising the findings to publlic sector employees in other national and culture contexts, particularly those with different levels of power distance and individualism-collectivism. In high power distance and collectivist societies, employees may place greater emphasis on hierarchy, authority, interpersonal relationships, and group harmony, which may shape their perceptions of organisational trust and their willingness to engage in voice behaviour. Future research could therefore replicate the study in public sector organisations across countries with different cultural characteristics, including both high and low power distance and collectivist and individualist contexts. Such comparative research could examine

whether the relationship between organisational trust and employee voice behaviour remain consistent across different cultural and public sector setting and provide a broader understanding of how cultural context shapes employees' willingness to speak up.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of organisational trust on employee voice behaviour within the Malaysian federal public sector, a collectivist and high power distance society. The findings demonstrate that organisational trust which is trust in organisation, leader and supervisors, has a significant positive influence on employee voice behaviour, suggesting that employees are more likely to express their ideas, concerns and suggestions when they have confidence in their authorities. This study extends the application of Social Cognitive Theory by highlighting trust, as an important cognitive antecedent linking to voice behaviour. Thus, it is suggested for organisations to strengthening trust-based relationships between authorities, particularly trust in supervisors, which can foster constructive employee voice, thereby supporting more inclusive and effective public sector organisations.

Theoritical and Contextual Contribution

This study contribute to existing knowledge in two important ways. Theoretically, the study extends Social Cognitive Theory by demonstrating that organisational trust, conceptualised through trust in organisation, trust in leader and trust in supervisor, functions as a cognitive factor associated with employees' voice behaviour. This extends the application of Social Cognitive Theory beyond general behavioural explanations by showing how employees' cognitive evaluations of trustworthiness across different organisational referents are associated with their willingness to express ideas, concerns and suggestions. Contextually, the study contributes empirical evidence from the Malaysian federal public sector, a formal and hierarchical setting in which authority, power distance and established organisational relationships are relevant to employees' communication behaviour. By examining organisational trust across three distinct referents within this context, the study adds evidence to the existing literature on employee voice and organisational trust and provides a more contextually grounded understanding of how trust is associated with employees' willingness to speak up in a public sector enviroment.

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