

The Relationship between Organizational and Individual Factors towards Employees' Voice Behaviour in the Malaysian Federal Public Sector

Nazia Abdul Hodi, Zaiton Hassan, Nur Fatihah Bandar, Mark Kasa

Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia, FSKPM, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Malaysia

Email: naziahodi90@gmail.com, abnfatihah@unimas.my, ekmark@unimas.my

Corresponding Author Email: hzaiton@unimas.my

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Abstract

Although previous research has examined the determinants of employee voice behaviour at organizational and individual levels, most studies have focused on western contexts. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory, this study examines the relationship between organisational openness, organization-based self-esteem, and employee voice behaviour. Data were collected from 372 respondents representing public sector organizations in Kuching, Sarawak, and analysed using SPSS 29.0 and SmartPLS 4. The findings indicate that organisational openness and organization-based self-esteem are positively and significantly related to employee voice behaviour. The findings extend Social Cognitive Theory by demonstrating that environmental and individual cognitive factors jointly explain employee voice behaviour within the hierarchical and high context Malaysian public sector. The findings highlight the importance of sustainable leadership and employee participation in decision-making in strengthening perceptions of organizational justice, enhancing employees' sense of being valued, and fostering two-way communication and voice behaviour, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 8). Furthermore, integrity, accountability, and openness are key principle for enhancing organization based self-esteem and promoting constructive voice behaviour, supporting the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (RMK-12). Thus, ministries, policymakers, organizations, and human resource practitioners are encouraged to cultivate an open environment and strengthen organization-based self-esteem to promote employee voice behaviour in Malaysia's public sector.

Keyword: Voice Behaviour, Organisational Openness, Organization Based Self-Esteem

Introduction

Voice behaviour refers to employees' actions of expressing information, opinions, or concerns related to the organization and has attracted substantial scholarly attention in Western contexts since the 1970s (Hirschman, 1970). Beyond Western settings, research on voice behaviour has expanded to countries such as China, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and

Malaysia. These countries are generally characterised by high-context cultures that emphasise social harmony, collectivism, and respect for hierarchy, which may discourage employees from speaking up due to concerns about disrupting organisational harmony (Morrison 2023; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001; Kozan, 1997).

According to Morrison (2011), voice behaviour is influenced by two main categories which is contextual and individual factors. Contextual factors include organisational and cultural aspects such as leadership, structure, and organisational climate, whereas individual factors encompass personal characteristics such as personality, self-values, and beliefs.

Evidence from Western countries such as the United States (Kim & Rim, 2023; McCarthy & Keller, 2022; Neill et al., 2020) and Portugal (Alves et al., 2024; Knoll et al., 2021) indicates that organisational factors, including managerial openness, organisational identity, and organisational climate, play a significant role in shaping voice behaviour. In contrast, studies conducted in western countries (Lou et al., 2026; Bohle et al., 2025; Tedone & Bruk-Lee, 2025; Gonzalez et al., 2021) also highlight the importance of individual factors, particularly personality, in influencing employees' willingness to speak up.

In the Malaysian context, a review of studies indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases between 2020 and 2025 reveals that both organisational (Ping et al., 2026; Zulham et al., 2022; Jamaludin et al., 2025) and individual factors (Lou, 2024; Arham et al., 2022; Nazia & Zaiton, 2021) affect voice behaviour. Organisational factors such as leadership, organisational openness and organisational support have been found to be closely associated with employees' voice behaviour. At the same time, individual factors, including Personality, psychological safety and self-efficacy, also contribute to employees' propensity to voice their opinions.

Although previous studies in Malaysia have examined employee voice behaviour from both organisational and individual perspectives, their focus has largely been on specific organisational and individual factors. For example, Malaysian studies have examined organisational factors such as leadership (Ping et al., 2026; Zulham et al., 2022), while other studies have considered individual factors such as psychological safety (Kim et al., 2024; Arham et al., 2022) and personality (Lou, 2024). However, limited attention has been given to examining organisational openness and organisation based self-esteem together in explaining employee voice behaviour. More importantly, limited attention has been given to this relationship within the Malaysian federal public sector context, where hierarchical structures, formal authority and organisational procedures may shape employees' willingness to express work related ideas, concerns and suggestions. Consequently, the existing Malaysian literature provides limited understanding of how organisational openness and employees' perceptions of their own value and importance may jointly contribute to employee voice behaviour. Addressing this gap, the present study integrates organisational openness and organisation based self-esteem to provide a more comprehensive explanation of employee voice behaviour among employees in the Malaysian federal public sector. This integration constitutes the novelty of the present study and provides the basis for its research objectives, which examine the relationships between organisational openness, organisation based self-esteem and employee voice behaviour.

This study is underpinned by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which explains that human behaviour is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of environmental, cognitive and behavioural factors. Within the context of this study, organisational openness represents the environmental factor, whereas organization based self esteem reflects the individual cognitive factor that influences employees' willingness to engage in voice behaviour. Accordingly, Social Cognitive Theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining how organisational and individual factors jointly shape employee voice behaviour.

Therefore, building on prior findings, this study integrates organisational and individual factors to examine voice behaviour in Malaysian organisations. Specifically, organisational openness is identified as a key organisational factor that promotes two way communication and an open work environment, while organization based self esteem represents an important individual factor reflecting employees' perceptions of their value and importance within the organisation. This distinction makes organization based self esteem particularly relevant for explaining employees' willingness to express constructive opinions despite potential interpersonal risks.

Literature Review

Employee Voice

Voice behaviour has become an important organisational behaviour that contributes to organisational improvement and effectiveness. Voice behaviour refers to the act of expressing suggestions and concerns aimed at improving the organisation and is classified into two types: promotive and prohibitive voice behaviour (Liang et al., 2012). Promotive voice behaviour focuses on offering suggestions for organisational improvement, whereas prohibitive voice behaviour aims to prevent harmful actions or warn against practices that may negatively affect organisational performance.

In the workplace, voice behaviour is conceptualised as an informal and individual level behaviour (Morrison, 2011). Prior research indicates that although voice behaviour is generally perceived as beneficial to organisations, it also involves personal risks for employees (Engemann & Scott, 2020; Son, 2019; Li & Tangirala, 2021). While employees' voice can contribute to organisational improvement, it may expose employees to potential negative consequences, particularly when their views challenge existing practices or authority (Detert & Burris, 2007).

The enactment of voice behaviour is strongly influenced by cultural context, particularly power distance and collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). In low power distance and individualistic cultures, such as those commonly found in Western countries, employees are more inclined to engage in voice behaviour. In contrast, employees in high power distance and collectivist cultures, including many Asian countries, are more likely to refrain from speaking up in order to preserve harmony and respect authority (Kozan, 1997). This reluctance may occur because voice behaviour often involves interpersonal risks, whereby employees must evaluate the potential consequences of expressing concerns or challenging existing practices (Morrison, 2014). Nevertheless, contemporary organisational changes are increasingly challenging these traditional norms, raising an important question: how can voice behaviour be effectively enacted in high power distance organisations that prioritise harmony and authority, such as those in Malaysia?

Organisational Openness

Organisational openness plays a crucial role in encouraging employees to engage in voice behaviour. Detert and Burris (2007) define organisational openness as the tendency of management to listen to subordinate employees and take appropriate actions in response to the issues raised. Such managerial actions foster a two-way communication culture and enhance employees' willingness to participate actively in organisational matters (Qian et al., 2021). Moreover, organisational openness has been shown to create psychological safety, which encourages employees to act courageously and engage in voice behaviour (Selvaraj & Joseph, 2022).

Organisational openness has a positive impact on employees' voice behaviour. Previous empirical findings have confirmed a positive relationship between organisational openness and various work processes and outcomes. For example, studies in the United States (Kim & Rim, 2023; Neill et al., 2020) found that practising organisational openness promotes employees' voice behaviour. This is because openness practices increase employees' sense of belonging and involvement within the organisation. Furthermore, a global review by Morrison (2023) concluded that employees are more likely to engage in voice behaviour when organisations create an environment that is open, supportive, and psychologically safe for expressing ideas, concerns, and suggestions.

Organisation Based Self-Esteem

Organisation based self-esteem (OBSE) plays a critical role in motivating employees to engage in proactive behaviours, particularly voice behaviour. OBSE refers to an individual's self-evaluation of their value and competence as a member of an organisation (Pierce et al., 1989). This construct is important in organisational behaviour studies because it reflects an individual aspect that influences employees' perception of their significance in achieving organisational goals. OBSE serves as an internal motivation that encourages proactive behaviours such as voice behaviour (Jaaffar & Samy, 2023).

High OBSE strengthens employees' self-efficacy, thereby promoting proactive engagement in the workplace. Employees with high OBSE tend to perceive their abilities as trusted and valuable to the organisation. This, in turn, enhances their self-efficacy, motivating them to act courageously and openly participate in proactive behaviours such as speaking up.

Empirical evidence supports the positive influence of OBSE on employee voice behaviour across cultural contexts. For example, Western studies (Bohle et al., 2025; King et al., 2020) show that OBSE positively moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee voice behaviour. Similarly, studies in Asia, including China (Xiao et al., 2023; Fang, 2023; Li et al., 2022) found that OBSE enhances employees' confidence, encouraging them to engage in voice behaviour.

Although organisation based self-esteem has been shown to be associated with employee voice behaviour, prior research provides limited explanation of the role of this individual factor. Instead, existing studies tend to focus on other individual factors, particularly personality traits (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Tedone & Bruk-Lee, 2020). This lack of comprehensive investigation and the neglect of individual psychological factors may result in a limited understanding of the individual level determinants of employee voice behaviour.

Furthermore, not all prior studies have reported consistent findings. For instance, findings by Liao et al. (2023) in China a context characterised by collectivist cultural values and a strong emphasis on authority indicate that even when employees possess organization based self-esteem, it does not necessarily encourage organisational citizenship behaviours such as voice behaviour. This is because organization based self-esteem can be shaped by the organisational environment. Consequently, within collectivist cultures that tend to be less open, employees are more likely to experience diminished confidence, which in turn may lead them to refrain from engaging in voice behaviour. According to Pierce and Gardner (2004), organization based self esteem is a malleable construct that can change depending on the cultural context practised within organisations. Therefore, this provides justification for examining the relationship between organisational openness, organization based self esteem and employee voice behaviour in the context of the Malaysian federal public sector.

The Relationship between Organisational Openness and Employee Voice

Voice behaviour is recognized as a proactive behaviour that contributes to organizational effectiveness through the expression of ideas, suggestions, and concerns aimed at improving organizational practices (Morrison, 2023). Consequently, increasing scholarly attention has been directed toward identifying organizational factors that foster a work environment where employees are willing to express their views. One such factor is organisational openness, which emphasizes open communication, transparency in decision making, employee involvement and continuous feedback (Splitter et al., 2022; Qian et al., 2021).

Organizations that embrace openness provide employees with opportunities to express their opinions and participate in organizational processes. Such an environment strengthens employee's perceptions that their views are valued and considered, while reducing concerns about the potential negative consequences of speaking up. Consistent with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), environmental factors play an important role in shaping individuals' expectations and behaviours. Accordingly, transparent communication, employee participation in decision making, and constructive feedback are expected to enhance employees' confidence and willingness to engage in voice behaviour.

Empirical evidence consistently supports this relationship across different organizational contexts. Previous studies have shown that open communication, organizational transparency, and leadership practices that encourage employee involvement enhance a climate of voice behaviour while reducing employees' tendency to remain silent (Knoll et al., 2021; Morrison, 2023). Similarly, studies conducted in Asian contexts have reported that an open organizational culture promotes psychological safety and encourages employee to express ideas and concern for organizational improvement (Liu et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2022; Selvaraj & Joseph, 2022). These findings are further supported by Fatoki (2024), Du (2024) and José et al. (2025), who found that organisational openness creates a supportive work environment that encourages employees to engage in voice behaviour.

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence discussed above, organisational openness is expected to positively influence employees' propensity to engage in voice behaviour. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Organisational openness has positive relationship with voice behaviour

The Relationship Between Organization Based Self-Esteem and Employee Voice

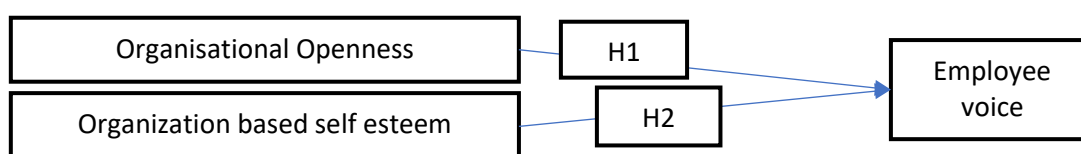
Employee voice behaviour is influenced not only by organizational factors but also by individual factors that shape employees' willingness to express ideas, suggestions and concerns for the purpose of organizational improvement (Morrison, 2011). One individual factor that has received increasing scholarly attention is organization based self esteem, which refers to employees' confidence in their value, importance, and contribution within the organization (Pierce et al., 1989). Employees with high organization based self esteem generally perceive themselves as valued, accepted and recognized by the organization. Such perceptions enhance their intrinsic motivation and confidence to contribute actively toward the achievement of organizational goals (Hui & Lee, 2000; Jaafar & Samy, 2023; Huang & Kwok, 2022).

The relationship can be explained by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which posits that individual behaviour is shaped by the interaction between environmental, cognitive, and behavioural factors. In an organizational context, experiences of receiving recognition, trust and appreciation from the organization foster employees' perceptions that they are valuable individuals capable of making meaningful contributions. These perception strengthen their confidence to express their views while reducing concerns about rejection, criticism, or other potential negative consequences of speaking up. Consequently, employees with high organization based self esteem are expected to be more willing to engage in voice behaviour.

Emperical evidence also demonstrates a consistent relationship between organization based self esteem and voice behaviour. Studies conducted in western contexts have reported that employees with high organization based self esteem are more willing to express ideas, are less influenced by fear of potential risks, and are more likely to engage in voice behaviour (Bohle et al., 2025; Ekrot et al., 2016). Similar findings have been reported in Asian contexts, where organization based self esteem has been found to enhance both promotive and prohibitive voice behaviour and encourage employees to continue expressing their opinions despite challenges encountered in the workplace (Su et al., 2021; Huang & Kwok, 2021; Li et al., 2022). Overall, emperical evidence across different contexts indicates that employees with high organization based self esteem possess greater confidence in their self-worth, thereby increasing their propensity to engage in voice behaviour.

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence presented above, organization based self esteem is expected to increase employees' propensity to engage in voice behaviour. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Organization based self esteem has positive relationship with voice behaviour.

Methodology*Research Framework*

Research Design and Study Sample

In this study, a quantitative approach and a questionnaire survey method were employed, as recommended by Creswell (2023), with the primary objective of examining the relationships between the organizational factor (organisational openness) and the individual factor (organization based self esteem) and voice behavior. The questionnaire was distributed through two modes: online and physical distribution, to ensure that every question in the structured questionnaire was completed.

A stratified probability sampling technique was employed. The minimum required sample size was 114, as determined using G-Power 3.1. However, a total of 327 respondents from twelve federal government agencies in Kuching, Sarawak, participated in this study. Although the required minimum sample size was relatively small, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed for data analysis because it is well suited for analysing complex research models (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, bootstrapping analysis was conducted to assess the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2022).

Result and Finding

Covergent and Discriminant Analysis

The assessment of convergent validity for the overall sample (n= 372) is presented in table 1. The analysis results indicate that the majority of the indicators achieved outer loading values ranging from 0.555 to 0.995, which are considered acceptable based on the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2022). One item RKO3_3 were removed during the outer loading assessment because recorded value below the 0.40 threshold.

In addition, the Composite Reliability (CR) analysis showed that all reflective constructs achieved values ranging from 0.905 to 0.962, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). Likewise, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) assessment indicate that each construct achieved a value greater than 0.50. Therefore, these findings demonstrate that the indicators used to measure the latent variables possess satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1

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

Latent Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	CR	AVE
KO	KO1_1	0.781	0.905	0.656
	KO2_2	0.843		
	KO4_4	0.729		
	KO6_6	0.864		
	KO7_7	0.826		
PB	PB10_33	0.738	0.934	0.588
	PB1_24	0.705		
	PB2_25	0.806		
	PB3_26	0.853		
	PB4_27	0.843		
	PB5_28	0.847		
	PB6_29	0.807		
	PB7_30	0.778		
	PB8_31	0.660		
	PB9_32	0.585		
PKBO	PKBO10_44	0.765	0.962	0.715
	PKBO1_35	0.788		
	PKBO2_36	0.814		
	PKBO3_37	0.883		
	PKBO4_38	0.886		
	PKBO5_39	0.810		
	PKBO6_40	0.895		
	PKBO7_41	0.850		
	PKBO8_42	0.894		
	PKBO9_43	0.857		

Note: Items RKO3_3, deleted. CR = Composite Reliability; AV = Average Variance Extracted. KO = Organisational Openness, PB = Voice Behaviour, PKBO = Organization Based Self Esteem. The indicator loadings were significant at 95% confidence level.

Meanwhile, table 2 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method. The analysis shows that all HTMT ratio values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90. This indicates that each latent variables is clearly distinguishable from the other latent variables. Therefore, the indicators used are appropriate and valid measurement model has established (Gold et al., 2001).

Table 2

Discriminant Validity Assessments Of Measurement Model for full sample

Latent Variable	KO	PB	PKBO
KO	-		
PB	0.626	-	
PKBO	0.529	0.670	-

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

Significance Testing and Hypothesis Testing

In PLS-SEM, statistical testing for each hypothesized relationship is conducted using the bootstrapping method. The bootstrapping procedure enables the determination of the statistical significance of the estimated path coefficients. Significance parameters indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between the study variables. The bootstrapping results obtained from the PLS-SEM analysis using SmartPLS 4 are presented through the structural model output, which includes the path coefficients, t values, p values and confidence intervals. These results are used to determine whether each hypothesized relationship is supported or rejected, as presented below.

Table 3

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

Hypot thesis	Relatio nship	Beta	Std Error	t values	p values	BCI LL	BCI UL	VIF	Effect Size			
									f2	Effect Type	R ²	Result
H1	KO →	0.1	0.0	1.90	0.02	0.0	0.2	2.5	0.0	Neglig		Suppo
	PB	19	63	3	9	18	24	21	14	ible	0.6	rted
H2	PKBO	0.1	0.0	2.23	0.01	0.0	0.2	2.9	0.0	Neglig	08	Suppo
	→ PB	46	65	7	3	43	58	04	19	ible		rted

Based on table 3, the analysis results indicate that organisational openness has a significant effect on voice behaviour ($\beta = 0.119$, $t = 1.903$, $p = 0.029$). Therefore, hypothesis H1 is supported.

Based on table 3, the analysis results indicate that organization based self esteem has a significant effect on voice behavior ($\beta = 0.146$, $t = 2.237$, $p = 0.013$). Therefore, hypothesis H2 is supported.

Discussion*Hypothesis 1: Organisational openness and voice behavior*

Based on the analysis results, the path coefficient for the relationship between organisational openness and voice behavior was 0.119, with a t value of 1.903. Therefore, it can be concluded that organisational openness has a significant relationship with voice behavior. This finding indicates that the greater the level of openness practiced within the organization, the greater the employees' tendency to engage in voice behavior.

The findings of this study are consistent with those reported by Knoll et al. (2021), who found that openness demonstrated by team managers within organizations enhances the voice climate among employees and reduces silence behavior. In addition, the findings of this study support the earlier study by Shepherd et al. (2019) in Germany, which reported that employees are more likely to engage in voice behavior when they exhibit prosocial behavior and when their supervisors are open in the workplace. Furthermore, other studies conducted in South Africa (Fatoki, 2024) and Asia (Yin et al., 2022; Selvaraj & Joseph, 2022) have reported similar findings, indicating that organizations that emphasize openness are more likely to encourage employees to engage in voice behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Organization based self esteem and voice behavior

Based on the analysis results, the path coefficient for the relationship between organization based self esteem and voice behavior was 0.146, with a t value of 2.237. Therefore, it can be concluded that organization based self esteem has a significant relationship with voice behavior. This finding indicates that the higher the level of organization based self esteem possessed by employees, the greater their tendency to engage in voice behavior.

The findings of this study are consistent with those reported by Bohle et al. (2025) in the Chile, South America, who found that organization based self esteem plays an important role in the relationship between transformational leadership and voice behavior. Similarly, Lou et al., (2026), based on study incorporating a united states employee survey, reported that organization based self esteem serves as an important mechanism through which leader feedback-seeking behaviour enhances employee voice. These finding suggest that employee who perceive themselves as valued and competent organisational members are more likely to express constructive ideas and suggestions that contribute to organisational improvement. Jahanzeb and Newell (2022), based on a three-wave study involving employees from North American organizations, further demonstrated that organization based self esteem plays a crucial mediating role in promoting promotive voice. Specifically, employees who experienced co-worker ostracism reported lower levels of organization based self esteem, which subsequently reduced their willingness to engage in promotive voice. These findings highlight that employees' beliefs about their values and competence as organisational members are important in encouraging them to express constructive ideas and suggestions.

This finding is also supported by evidence from China. Li et al. (2022) demonstrated that organization based self esteem serves as an important psychological mechanism in the voice process. Specifically, employees whose ideas are acknowledged and adopted by their leaders develop higher organization based self esteem, which subsequently contributes to more positive work related outcomes. Similarly, Huang and kwok (2021), based on the study conducted in China, found that organization based self esteem was positively associated with customer focused voice. Employees with higher organization based self esteem were more willing to communicate constructive suggestions and service improvement ideas because they perceived themselves as valued organisational members. Further evidence from China was reported by Su et al. (2021), who found that organization based self esteem positively strengthened the relationship between supervisors' developmental feedback and both promotive and prohibitive voice behaviour. Their findings suggest that employees with higher organization based self esteem are more likely to respond to developmental feedback by expressing constructive suggestions and speaking up about work related problems, thereby contributing to organisational improvement.

This finding also supports the earlier study by Ekrot et al. (2016), which found that the positive relationships between idea encouragement, work perspective, qualification opportunities, peer collaboration and voice behavior become stronger when employees possess high level of organization based self esteem. Collectively, these findings suggest that organization based self esteem serves as an important psychological resource that enhances employees' confidence to express constructive ideas and suggestions, thereby encouraging voice behaviour across different organisational and culture contexts.

Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the application of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) in explaining employee voice behaviour within the Malaysian public sector. The findings demonstrate that employee voice is shaped by the reciprocal interaction between environmental factors (organisational openness) and individual cognitive factor (organization based self esteem), thereby supporting the theory to a high hierarchy and high context organisational setting, providing empirical evidence that organisational and individual factors jointly influence proactive employee behaviour.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that ministries and public sector organisations should strengthen organisational openness by promoting transparent communication, encouraging constructive feedback, and providing safe channels for employees to express ideas and concerns. Such initiatives can foster a work environment where employees feel more confident and willing to engage in voice behaviour despite hierarchical organisational structures.

In addition, organisations should implement human resource practices that enhance employees' organization based self esteem, including performance recognition, supportive supervisory feedback, employee involvement in decision making, and leadership development programmes. These initiatives can strengthen employees' confidence and psychological courage to speak up, ultimately contributing to a more innovative, responsive and continuously improving public sector.

The findings of this study are also aligned with the aspirations of Malaysia's, Twelfth Malaysia Plan (RMK-12), particularly in strengthening public sector governance, improving the quality of public service delivery, and developing a high-performing and competent public workforce. By fostering organisational openness and enhancing employees' organization based self esteem, public sector organisations can encourage employee voice behaviour, enabling employees to contribute constructive ideas, identify operational issues, and participate in continuous service improvement. Such practices support more transparent, accountable, and responsive public institutions, which are consistent with RMK-12's emphasis on strengthening governance and enhancing the effectiveness of the public service.

Furthermore, from the organisational and industrial perspective, the practical implications encourage organisations to cultivate a culture of organisational openness and to adopt more practical and systematic approaches to enhancing employees' organization based self esteem. For instance, organisations can establish two way communication mechanisms such as town hall meetings, dialogue forums, digital suggestion boxes, or electronic voice (e-voice) platforms. These initiatives can increase employees' confidence to express their views without fear of negative consequences.

Moreover, formal dialogue platforms commonly used in Malaysia can be further strengthened by incorporating official recognition mechanisms for voice behaviour, such as certificates of appreciation or merit points. This approach can foster an open work environment, enhance employees' organisation based self esteem and reduce the negative effects of highly hierarchical organisational structures. Indirectly, employees are encouraged to engage more confidently in voice behaviour.

In addition, the findings of this study contribute important implications from the social perspective. Within the public sector context, employee voice behaviour plays a critical role as an internal social mechanism that supports organisational openness and transparency. When employees are willing to voice their views or concerns regarding ineffective work practices, organisations are able to identify service shortcomings at an early stage before they generate negative social or societal impacts.

Furthermore, the cultivation of organisation based self esteem among employees serves as a key driver of employee voice. This, in turn, enhances the quality of organisational decision making, as employees are individuals who are directly involved in the delivery of public services. Indirectly, organisations are better able to design and adapt their services to meet social needs more effectively. From a broader social perspective, public organisations that adopt a culture of openness and foster employees' organization based self esteem by providing space for employee voice tend to demonstrate higher levels of institutional accountability. Such accountability enhances positive societal perceptions of government organisations, as the public views public institutions as transparent and fair. Ultimately, these practices contribute to overall social well-being.

Finally, the findings of this study provide important implications from the environmental or organisational sustainability perspective by demonstrating that organisations that are open and foster organization based self esteem contribute to organisational sustainability. This is achieved through improvements in employees' psychological well-being and reductions in anticipated negative consequences, which in turn encourage employees to engage more openly in voice behaviour. Accordingly, human resource practitioners should develop work practices that enhance employees' organization based self-esteem while simultaneously supporting organisational openness and voice behaviour. For example, continuous training programmes focusing on soft communication skills, such as professional voice expression and active listening, can be implemented. These initiatives help to develop employees' communication management competencies.

Within the Malaysia organisational context, which is characterised by high hierarchical structures and a strong emphasis on harmony, employees require structured training in effective communication development. For instance, public sector employee training is generally conducted through collaboration with government training centres, while private sector organisations and Government-Linked Companies (GLCs) typically contribute to the Human Resource Development Corporation (HRD Corp), which is responsible for workforce skills development and training in Malaysia, particularly within the private sector. Such initiatives not only promote an open career culture and enhance employees' perceptions of organization based self esteem, but also encourage voice behaviour while maintaining organisational harmony. This is consistent with the findings of Xu et al. (2019), who reported that employee voice contributes to employees' psychological safety. Therefore, training programmes not only improve communication competencies but also equip employees with strategies to manage actions under pressure or in critical situations, enabling them to continue voicing concerns even when organisational support is limited. Beyond organisational sustainability, these findings also contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth), by promoting inclusive, psychologically safe, and supportive workplaces that

encourage employee voice behaviour and continuous organisational improvement. In addition, the findings support SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and strong Institutions) by strengthening transparency, accountability, and participative decision making within public sector organisations. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate that fostering organisational openness and enhancing employees' organization based self esteem not only improve organisational sustainability but also support Malaysia's broader commitment to sustainable and effective public governance.

Limitations

First, a limitation of this study is that the respondents involved only employees from the public sector, without considering employees from the private sector. As a result, the findings are limited in their generalisability to the private or non-governmental sectors.

Second, this study employed a survey questionnaire method, which required respondents to complete the questionnaire through self-report and relied on a single source of data. This may potentially lead to perceptual bias. In addition, the cross-sectional research design used in this study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables.

Third, this study did not examine employee voice behaviour in detail according to specific types, such as constructive voice, destructive voice, challenging voice, and supportive voice. Consequently, the actual influence of the examined factors on employee voice behaviour could not be identified specifically for each type of voice.

However, the novelty of this research lies in emphasis on the organizational environment factor, namely organisational openness, and the individual factor through a psychological mechanism, namely organization based self esteem, which has received limited empirical attention in highly hierarchical organisations that prioritise harmony. In addition, whereas previous studies have tended to employ multiple linear regression analysis, this study applies the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach using SmartPLS software for data analysis. This application enables the variables to be examined simultaneously and produces more accurate findings.

Conclusion

This study examines the influence of organisational openness and organization based self esteem on employee voice behaviour. The findings indicate that organisational openness and organization based self esteem have significant positive influence on employee voice behaviour within the context of the Malaysian federal public sector. Thus, it is suggested that ministries, policymakers, organisations, and human resource practitioners prioritise the development of an open organisational environment and implement initiatives that strengthen employees' organization based self esteem. Such efforts can promote sustainable leadership and employee involvement in decision making, strengthen perceptions of organisational justice, enhance employees' sense of being valued, and foster two way communication and employee voice within the public sector, thereby supporting the objectives of sustainable development Goal (SDG8). Furthermore, emphasising integrity, accountability, and openness can encourage constructive employee voice while supporting the aspirations of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (RMK-12).

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