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Speak Up! Factors Contributing towards Employee Voice Behaviour

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Abstract
In any business working environment, it is commonly claimed that the employees are one of the important aspects for organizational performance. Their voices are an important input for organizational sustainability and development. Thus, they need to SPEAK UP in order for their organization to act on ways for improvement. However, there has not much attention given to explore employee voice behaviour, especially within the working context in Malaysia. Taking on the employee-centric approach, this research took the initiative to explore on factors contributing towards employee voice behaviour that include supervisor and managerial support, psychological safety and work ownership. Using the SPSS version 26 method, three hypotheses were tested on data obtained from online questionnaire survey of 405 respondents working in the highway infrastructure companies. The findings indicated that the respondents perceived all the three factors as fairly important towards employee voice behaviour. However, only two of them have significant positive effects on employee voice behaviour which are work ownership, and supervisor and managerial support, but not psychological safety. The implications are also discussed.
Keywords: Employee Voice Behaviour, Supervisor and Organizational Support, Psychological Safety, Work Ownership

Introduction
It is assumed that all companies and businesses strive towards a common goal which is to achieve sustainable success and profitability. To achieve these, contributions from employees are highly important. Um-e-Rubbab and Naqvi (2020) suggest that employee voice behaviour is part of essential element of employees' contributions towards organizational success. Organizations that are purposed-driven usually have high degrees of employee engagement and satisfaction. However, only if the purpose and values are truly co-created with employees will the benefits be provident, in which high degree of employee voice plays a pivotal role in such situations. Without employee voice, any goals and values can only be accepted by employees reluctantly as it is being decided unilaterally.

Nearly all organizations are aware and conscious to the fact that employee engagement offers their organization with a competitive advantage in order to outperform their rivals (Anitha,

2014; Rodriguez & Shaw, 2014). Employee voice is pivotal to unravelling and developing human talent. It is often said that individuals are creative, dedicated and innovative until when it comes to matters related with work. This raises the concern of the untapped innate qualities and talents that employees could bring in to work and become a competitive advantage to the company if only they were given a chance to speak up, give ideas and receive support by their managers.

In addition, when important issues are being discussed and employees remain silent, just follow with the status quo or speak up only to protect their personal interest, poor decision may be made which could lead organization and its members to be harmed. When employees feel they are unable to say their piece, negative emotions like resentment, frustration, anxiety and anger are likely to result in a decrease of motivation, productivity and may also repress creativity. Such negativity can be psychologically damaging (Morison, 2014). If such situation happens on a departmental or organization-wide scale, it will cause significant consequences in the performance and bring about further problems such as increased attrition. Corporations with sophisticated procedures and mechanisms for employee voice is able to improve therefore able to guard against any challenges that derive from the psychological demands of being duty-bound to be silent (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Milliken, Morrison & Hewlin, 2003; Morrison, 2014).

Studies on employee voice behaviour has yet to receive much attention (Um-e-Rubbab & Naqvi, 2020). Previous studies have suggested that employees often do not feel comfortable bringing up issues, concerns and problems to their superior, there is much that we are unsure of why individuals choose to remain silent (Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009). Therefore, the main objective of this paper is:

RO: To examine the relationship between supervisor and organization support, psychological safety and work ownership towards employee voice behaviour.

In order to achieve this, there are two research questions posited:

RQ1: What is the perception of employees with regards to factors affecting employee voice behaviour?
RQ2: Is there any significant effect between supervisor and organizational support, psychological safety and work engagement towards employee voice behaviour?

It is hoped that a better understanding could be developed on how to manage employee voice behaviour successfully within organization. Theoretically, this research adds to the limited body of knowledge, especially on the area of managing employee voice behaviour within the context of Malaysia. Practically, organization could strategize strategies that could lead them to optimize on employee voice behaviour to their advantage.

Literature Review
Employee Voice Behaviour
Voice behaviour by Le Pine & Van Dyne (1998) can be described as a behaviour that is not necessarily formal yet conveys constructive viewpoints for the purpose of improving the organization. It is a form of proactive behaviour by employees to communicate on change

and optimize the organizational's interest (Andiyasari et al., 2017). Likewise, voice behaviour is defined as a purposeful expression of an individual's opinions and ideas regarding prospects of progress (Dyne et al., 2003). Other studies (Liang et al., 2012; Detert & Burris, 2007) have asserted equivalent elements of voice behaviour, including planned or involuntary actions that are targeted for betterment of organizations.

Supervisor and Organizational Support
Previous studies have also emphasized the role of supervisors and organizational support in promoting employees' voice behaviour. Another interesting result drawn from Edmondson's (2003) research shows that when supervisors have openness to change, employees are inclined to have more of a mind to contribute by voicing their opinions. A leader's openness refers to leader's ability to take into consideration of improvement-oriented suggestions and ultimately acknowledge them, thereby motivates workers to say their piece (Milliken et al., 2003). However, in many organizations, some may not be viewed as very open or interested to hear the input from employees which may stifle voice.

Previous study has found that there is a positive relationship between supervisor and organizational support with employee voice behaviour. When there exists support from supervisor and organization, employee will be more likely to engage in voice behaviour. When supervisors and organizations promote upward communication, employees are driven to contribute their opinions (Hassan et al., 2015). To support this, recent study by Son (2019) has also found that there is a positive and significant relationship between supervisor and employee's voice behaviour Thus, this study suggests the following hypothesis:

H1: Supervisor and organizational support has a positive and significant effect towards employee voice behaviour.

Psychological Safety
One of the factors that could significantly impact voicing out is employee's perceptions towards the existing psychological safety. In a work setting, psychological safety refers to create an environment in which employees feel accepted and respected (Kuriakose & Soumyaja, 2020). If workers know the possible costs that may result from their decision to voice out, they may hesitate to express constructive critics or point of view with fear of negative consequences outcomes for personal and interpersonal matters (Detert & Burris, 2007; Chen et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2012). When facing behaviours that entail uncertainty, employees are likely to rely on their group's shared beliefs. Thus, Morrison et al (2011) argued that if the climate of work group favours constructive ideas, employees are more inclined to voice out when they perceive the situation is acceptable.

Furthermore, when employees perceive the organization takes care of their basic requirements, they tend to reciprocate positively by taking proactive measures, commit extra work voluntarily, to voice out for the benefit of their work or organization (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). In other terms, because psychological ownership fulfils employees' need for identity, it affects their voice behaviour. As the perceived psychological safety increases, the employee's voice behaviour also may increase. Employees will become passive and abstain to share constructive ideas and preventive suggestions if they do not feel safe to speak (Kanten & Ulker, 2012). Thus, this research proposed that:

H2: Psychological safety has a significant effect towards employee voice behaviour.

Work Ownership
The third independent variable is work ownership. Previous study contended that there is a positive relationship between work ownership and employee voice behaviour. This is due to employees having felt their sense of obligations will share their views for the betterment of the job and workplace, also engaging in proactive voice behaviour (Page et al., 2019).

Thus, this research predicts that when workers have a sense of ownership towards their job or organization, they are more driven to improve by offering valuable inputs. This argument is consistent with the findings of Pierce and Jussila (2011) that employee's ownership and attitude towards their job is positively related to their voice behaviour. Thus, this research postulates that:

H3: Work ownership has a significant effect towards employee voice behaviour.

Research Methodology
Taking on the positivism perspective, this research is a quantitative study to observe the relationship between independent variables that consist of supervisor and organizational support, psychological safety and work ownership towards employee voice behaviour. The respondents of this research are employees currently working in one of the highway infrastructure companies in Malaysia with a total population of 650 employees. A structured questionnaire with a four-point Likert-scale was developed; "1" as strongly disagree to "4" as strongly agree. In order to obtain the right number of sample size from the total population, the table from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was referred to. Based from the table, a sample size of 234 is needed for this study. To achieve the number of samples, convenience sampling was chosen.

For the distribution of the questionnaire, an online survey form was prepared. After receiving an approval from the top management to conduct the survey, an invitation email to participate in the survey was sent out. Online survey was chosen due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and Restricted Movement Order ("RMO") from the government, at the time this research was undertaken.

There are three sections of the questionnaire. The first section focuses on the demographic profile of respondents. The second questions relating to the three independent variables. There were eight items adapted from Kanten and Ulker (2012) for supervisor and organizational support. There were eight items adapted from Page, Boysen and Arya (2019) for psychological safety. There were eight items adapted from Hassan, Hassan and Batool (2015) for work ownership. The third section consists of questions relating to employee voice behaviour as the dependent variable. There were nine items also adapted from Hassan et al. (2015).

Findings and Analysis
Response Rate
Based from the population of 650 employees, the intended target sample as suggested by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) is 234. However, based on the distribution of questionnaire to

respective population of study, this research managed to obtain 405 respondents, which successfully yielded a 62% response rate.

Reliability Analysis
Table 1
Reliability Analysis

VARIABLE	NO. OF ITEMS	ITEMS REMOVED	α	INTERPRETATION
Employee voice behaviour	9	-	.880	Good
Supervisor and organization support	8	1 (C7)	.907	Excellent
Psychological safety	8	1 (D8)	.777	Good
Work ownership	8	1 (E5)	.745	Good

Cronbach's Alpha is commonly used to assess the internal consistency of a questionnaire that is made up of multiple Likert-type scales and items. This research developed a total of 33 questions to study the factors that prompt employee voice behaviour. The questions were on the 4-point Likert Scale with responses ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree".

With the purpose of determining whether the questionnaire could be reliable to measure the variables such as employee voice behaviour, supervisor and organization support, psychological safety and work ownership, the Cronbach's alpha test was conducted. The acceptable reliability value is 0.6 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; George & Mallery, 2003). In Table 1 above, the Cronbach's alpha scores for the four variables was obtained have more than 0.6 individually. There were items removed, each for every independent variable to increase the value of Cronbach's alpha to increase their internal consistency. Hence, these results indicated that all values possessed good and excellent value of internal consistency.

Demographic Profile
There were 405 respondents involved in this study. Of these, 237 were male respondents and 168 were females represented by 58.5% and 41.5% respectively. Majority of respondents were within the age group of 30-34 years old with 25.4% of the sample population. In terms of highest level of education, majority of respondents only possessed high school certificates with 69.4% of the sample population. This is followed by Diploma with 16.3% and Bachelor Degree with 11.6%. Non-executive level was highly represented by the respondents of this study with 81.7%. Finally, with regards to years of working experience, majority of respondents possessed five to ten years of working experience with 153 respondents representing 37.8% of sample population.

Descriptive Analysis
Table 2
Descriptive Analysis (N=405)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employee voice behaviour	3.10	0.466
Supervisor and organization support	3.15	0.572
Psychological safety	2.97	0.494
Work ownership	2.98	0.370

Mean is used to measure the central tendency of the arithmetic average of the scores. It is also a measure used to assess how does the respondents perceive the importance of each variable. Referring to Table 2, employee voice behaviour has a moderate mean value of 3.10. It indicates that majority of respondents are somewhat agree that employee voice behaviour is important. For the three independent variables, the mean scores also indicate that the respondents fairly agree that all of them are fairly important. To rank them according to what they perceived, supervisor and organization support has the highest mean (M=3.15), then work ownership (M=2.98) and finally psychological safety (M=2.97).

Regression Analysis
Regression analyses were conducted on independent variables (supervisor and organization support, psychological safety and work ownership) and the dependent variable (employees' voice behaviour). Regressions were used to construct a model in Table 3.

Table 3
Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Employee voice behaviour		
Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t-statistic	Significant
H1: Supervisor & organization support	0.158	2.514	0.012
H2: Psychological safety	0.045	0.709	0.479
H3: Work ownership	0.494	11.027	0.000
F value	77.791 $p = 0.000$		
Model summary = R^2	0.370		
Adjusted R square	0.363		

In this analysis, R^2 value indicated that 37% variance in the dependent variable (employee voice behaviour) is explained by the variation of the independent variables (supervisor and organization support, psychological safety and work ownership). However, 63% of the dependent variable is explained by other variables not included in this study. Also, this model is statistically significant F = 77.791, $p < 0.05$. It hints that the independent variables were robust in predicting employees' voice behaviour.

In the standardized Beta value, it shows which independent variables have the strongest and significance effect towards the dependent variable. As we can see, the most important (strongest) independent variable would be the work ownership as the magnitude of standardized coefficient is the highest, with a beta weight of 0.494 ($p < 0.001$). It explains that as work ownership increases by one standard deviation, employee's voice behaviour increases by 0.494 of a standard deviation. This is followed by supervisor and organizational support with a beta value of 0.158 ($p < 0.05$). However, the beta value for psychological safety was the lowest with a value of 0.045 ($p > 0.05$) indicating that it made less of a contribution, and yet the p-value indicated the relationship is not significant.

It showed that only two independent variables are having a good fit in predicting employee voice behaviour. In summary, supervisor and organization support (H1) and work ownership (H3) were significant predictors of employees' voice behaviour, while psychological safety (H2) was not a statistically significant predictor of employee voice behaviour. Between supervisor and organization support and work ownership, the latter possesses the most significant effect on employee voice behaviour.

Discussion
In the business working environment, it is commonly heard that the employees are one of the important aspects for organizational performance. Employees act as idea proponents and contribute with suggestions, concerns and opinions in the workplace as they are the ones who are closest to the stakeholders like the customers, suppliers and distributors. Organizations need feedback from them not only to identify ways of improvement in any form of business initiative with regards to their products and services, but also honest comment from them on how to improve their well-being in the organization and treat them better.

However, due to some factors, employees every so often opt to be silent. The following research essentially aims to contribute to knowledge in this area by exploring the factors influencing employee voice behaviour in the workplace. Taking an employee-centric approach, the research investigates employee voice behaviour against three factors: supervisor and organization support, psychological safety and work ownership. It was hypothesized that, there is a positive and significant relationship between supervisor and organization support, psychological safety and work ownership towards employee voice behaviour.

Based on the perceived importance, the respondents perceived that supervisor and organizational support as the most important factor. This is followed by work ownership and psychological safety. However, based on the regression analysis, the result indicated that work ownership is the most significant predictor for employee voice behaviour ($\beta = 0.494$, $p < 0.05$). This is also parallel to the finding reported by Abdullah, Ismail, Alnoor and Yaqoub (2021) indicating that a direct effect was established and significant between work engagement and employee voice behaviour. The research by Su, Liu, & Hanson-Rasmussen (2017) illuminated that employees with a high work ownership have a strong desire and a sense of obligation to perform behaviours that profits the organization. Employees will naturally spend extra time at work and suggest practical ideas to resolve interpersonal conflicts among work colleagues. Practically, employees with high sense of obligation will

frequently need to share their views for the betterments of their job scope and projects as well as for the betterment of their organization.

Also, this research is able to establish that supervisor and organizational support significantly contributes and affects employee voice behaviour (β = 0.158, $p < 0.05$). The result is similar with the findings of Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher and Hope-Hailey (2011) and Son (2019) on investigating the relationship between supervisor and organization support and employees' voice behaviour. It indicates that organization needs to provide support in the forms of various platforms and system including effective supervisory personnel that is supportive for their staff to give inputs, feedback and grievances when facing problems. Cold and bold managers could get the job done, but wise and transformational leader could achieve greater heights (Arham, 2014). As culture always begin from the top, clear and supportive support from supervisor and organizational leaders would create a more positive work culture among the employees.

However, this finding found that psychological safety is not a significant factor to employees' voice behaviour. Psychological safety could be defined as the perceptions individuals have regarding the consequences of interpersonal stakes in the workplace (Edmondson, 2003). This insignificant finding could be explained by the distribution of respondents in this research. The data showed that employees with less than 10 years of experience made up about 65% of total population. Perhaps, they still do not feel secure and comfortable to really speak their mind out and thus they are being very mindful with their feedbacks at the workplace. The insignificant relationship of psychological safety also could imply that this factor perhaps could become a moderator in the future research, as suggested by (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

Conclusion

As for the conclusion, the research contends that managing employee voice behaviour is not only a practice, but it is a culture that an organization needs to master. For the betterment of the organizational performance, there must exist a proper platform for the employees to speak up without hesitations and restrictions to ensure continuous growth. Issues pertaining to the work and organizational functions must be treated professionally and employees should be allowed to voice out constructive criticism, suggestions and ideas in order to cultivate more positive developments and culture within organizational system. The outcomes of this study contribute to the body of knowledge in the area employee voice behaviour especially within the context of Malaysia, as there is still limited research being undertaken in the past. Promoting a healthy voice behaviour or communication within the organization, could create a healthy culture. Practically, organization should now be aware that, to create a healthy voice behaviour culture in the organization, the employee must be empowered with sufficient amount of authority within their job scope and there must be support from the supervisor and also organization. Organizations that condemned employees' opinion might lose some vital information that they need to sustain their performance.

Finally, this study is not without limitations. First, this study is undertaken only among employees working in the highway infrastructure company. It limits the generalizability of the

findings to the other industry. Secondly, it is a cross-sectional survey, where the data represent only a snapshot of a particular group of people at a particular time.

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