# Silence and voice in the workplace:
# A mixed methods study on employee well-being in the UK and Malaysia

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
in Occupational Psychology

**Choo Wei Hoong**

**August 2021**

# Contents

**Preliminary pages**
List of Tables iv
List of Figures vi
Abstract vii

**Chapter 1: Introduction**
1.1 Introduction 9
1.2 The Debates Central to the Thesis 9
1.3 Background to the Research 10
1.4 Research Objectives 12
1.5 Research Methodology 13
1.6 Contributions of the Thesis 14
1.7 Thesis Structure 15

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**
2.1 Introduction 17
2.2 Silence and Voice in the Workplace 17
2.3 Employee Silence and Voice from a Well-being Perspective 28
2.4 Employee Silence and Voice Within a Cultural Context 36
2.5 Chapter Summary 49

**Chapter 3: Method**
3.1 Introduction 50
3.2 Research Scope 50
3.3 Methodological Rationale 52
3.4 Research Design 55
3.5 Chapter Summary 57

**Chapter 4: Study 1 - Semi-structured Interviews**
4.1 Introduction 58
4.2 Method 59
4.3 Themes that address Research Question 1 69
4.4 Themes that address Research Question 2 (Part a) 85
4.5 Themes that address Research Question 2 (Part b) 92
4.6 Analysis Summary 99

**Chapter 5: Study 2 - Online Questionnaire**
5.1 Introduction 101
5.2 Method 104
5.3 Effects of Change: Independent Samples *t*-test 121
5.4 Silence and Voice Orientation: Independent Samples *t*-test 126
5.5 Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention: Simple Regression Analysis 128
5.6 Participant Characteristics and Correlates 133
5.7 Moderating Effect of Perceived Support: Moderated Regression Analysis 138
5.8 Analysis Summary 143

**Chapter 6: Study 3 - Discourse Analysis**
6.1 Introduction 145
6.2 Method 146
6.3 Choice 155
6.4 Change 162
6.5 Community 167
6.6 Analysis Summary 171

**Chapter 7: Discussion**
7.1 Introduction 173
7.2 Addressing Research Question 1 175
7.3 Addressing Research Question 2 177
7.4 Addressing Research Question 3 181
7.5 Addressing Research Question 4 184
7.6 Chapter Summary 187

**Chapter 8: Conclusion**
8.1 Introduction 189
8.2 Contributions to the Academic Debate 189
8.3 Implications for Practice 190
8.4 Limitations 191
8.5 Directions for Future Research 193
8.6 Concluding Remarks 193

**References** 195

**Appendices**
Appendix 1: Study 1 Participant Information Sheet 215
Appendix 2: Study 1 Consent Form 218
Appendix 3: Study 1 Interview Schedule 219
Appendix 4: Study 2 Online Questionnaire 221
Appendix 5: UK1 232
Appendix 6: UK2 234
Appendix 7: UK3 236
Appendix 8: MY1 239
Appendix 9: MY2 241

Word Count: 81,629

## List of Tables


2.1 Definitions of Employee Silence and Voice 19
2.2 Variables that can Motivate or Inhibit Voice 25
4.1 Participants' Demographics 61
4.2 Factors that influence employee silence and voice decisions 69
4.3 Aspects of silence and voice leading to different well-being outcomes 85
4.4 Well-being related outcomes as a result of silence and voice 93
5.1 Sample size by country and type of experience 105
5.2 Participants' demographic characteristics 106
5.3 Participants' organisational characteristics and work experience 107
5.4 Key Variables/Scales in the online questionnaire 109
5.5 Reliability and validity of measures from the literature 113
5.6 Cronbach alpha for internal reliability of scales for the UK and Malaysia 114
5.7 Correlation matrix for the 6 employee silence items 115
5.8 Total variance explained for the employee silence scale 116
5.9 Factor loadings after varimax rotation for employee silence items 116
5.10 Correlation matrix for the 8 employee voice items 117
5.11 Total variance explained for the employee voice scale 118
5.12 Factor loadings after varimax rotation for employee voice items 118
5.13 Total variance explained for the employee voice scale (adjusted) 119
5.14 Factor loadings after varimax rotation for the employee voice items (adjusted) 120
5.15 Outcome of silence and voice by country 121
5.16 UK: Psychological well-being for voice – better and silence – no change 122
5.17 UK: Psychological well-being for voice – no change and silence – no change 122
5.18 MY: Psychological well-being for voice – better and silence – no change 123
5.19 MY: Psychological well-being for voice – no change and silence – no change 123
5.20 UK: Turnover intention for voice – better and silence – no change 124
5.21 UK: Turnover intention for voice – no change and silence – no change 124
5.22 MY: Turnover intention for voice – better and silence – no change 125
5.23 MY: Turnover intention for voice – no change and silence – no change 125
5.24 UK: Mean score difference between pro-self silence and prosocial silence 126
5.25 UK: Mean score difference between pro-self voice and prosocial voice 126
5.26 MY: Mean score difference between pro-self silence and prosocial silence 127
5.27 MY: Mean score difference between pro-self voice and prosocial voice 127
5.28 Correlations between employee silence and participant characteristics 133
5.29 Correlations between employee voice and participant characteristics 134
5.30 Reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations among the key variables (employee silence) 135
5.31 Reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations among the key variables (employee voice) 137
5.32 Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the UK and Malaysia 138
5.33 UK: Model summary statistics 139
5.34 UK: Linear model of predictors of psychological well-being 139
5.35 MY: Model summary statistics 141
5.36 MY: Linear model of predictors of psychological well-being 142

6.1 UK: Monthly readership between January to December 2019 148
6.2 Malaysia: Daily circulation over two periods in 2015 and 2018 148
6.3 Online articles used for the text analysis 149
6.4 Textual analysis checklist 152
7.1 Studies addressing the research questions 174
7.2 Forms of employee silence and voice about workplace issues of concern 177

## List of Figures

1.1 Essential Components of a Psychologically Healthy Workplace 11
1.2 Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design 14
2.1 Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect Model 21
2.2 Forms of Silence and Voice 23
2.3 Cultural Dimension Index for the UK and Malaysia 40
2.4 British Isles Terminology 42
2.5 Malaysia on the Map 44
3.1 Research Methodology: Sequential Mixed Methods Design 56
5.1 A model of the moderating effect of Perceived Support on the relationship between Silence and Psychological Well-being 103
5.2 Participants' cultural orientation in the UK 107
5.3 Participants' cultural orientation in Malaysia 108
5.4 Experience before remaining silent or speaking up about concern (%) 108
5.5 UK: Scatterplot of Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention 128
5.6 UK: Normality of Residuals of Turnover Intention 128
5.7 UK: Homoscedasticity of Turnover Intention 129
5.8 UK: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardised Residual 129
5.9 MY: Scatterplot of Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention 130
5.10 MY: Normality of Residuals of Turnover Intention 131
5.11 MY: Homoscedasticity of Turnover Intention 131
5.12 MY: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardised Residual 132
5.13 UK: The moderating effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on the relationship between Prosocial Silence and Psychological Well-being 140
5.14 UK: The moderating effect of Perceived Organisational Support on the relationship between Pro-self Silence and Psychological Well-being 141
7.1 The reparation of the Psychological Contract model 182
7.2 A summary of the key concepts related to silence and voice 187

# Silence and voice in the workplace: A mixed methods study on employee well-being in the UK and Malaysia


## Abstract

There is a growing body of research on employee silence to complement the research conducted on employee voice. Studies indicate that silence is pervasive in workplaces leading to negative consequences for individuals and organisations, with explanations offered on the causal effect of employee silence and voice. However, previous studies primarily investigated employee silence *or* employee voice, but not both constructs within the same research. Voice is presented as the desired choice, even though there is evidence of the detrimental effects of speaking up about workplace issues of concern on employees. Research on employee silence and voice is also conducted mostly in western contexts. Although there are studies conducted in eastern contexts in more recent years, there is no focus on cultural variation of silence and voice and its impact on employee well-being. Since the UK and Malaysia have traditionally contrasting cultures in terms of power distance and individualism-collectivism, investigating the cultural variation of the effects of both constructs on employees from these two countries allows us to have a nuanced understanding of why employees remain silent and speak up under different contexts and conditions, and its impact on an individual level.

The main aim of this thesis is to enhance our understanding of the impact of employee silence and voice on individuals' well-being in the UK and Malaysia through a balanced investigation of the two constructs. A sequential mixed methods design is used that involved three studies. There is an emphasis on the first qualitative study that drives the subsequent quantitative and qualitative studies. The first study involved semi-structured interviews with 32 employees from the UK (n = 16) and Malaysia (n = 16). The quantitive study used a sample of 340 employees from the UK (n = 182) and Malaysia (n = 158), while the final qualitative study consisted of publicly available online articles in the UK (n = 3) and Malaysia (n = 2) mainstream media.

The current research discovered a further categorisation of issues that participants remain silent or speak up about that are either task-related or person-related. Contrary to the common assumptions, voice is not always beneficial, and silence is not entirely detrimental, based on my qualitative findings. My quantitative study further supports this. The results show that: 1)

there are some psychological benefits for UK employees when remaining silent under contexts where perceived support is low, and 2) change, not silence nor voice, is related to employee psychological well-being for both the UK and Malaysia. The findings show that there is hardly any cross-cultural differences between the two countries. By taking into account cultural variation, my research presents a new categorisation of employee silence and voice that focuses on the fundamental reasons why individuals remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern. For the UK and Malaysia, voice is primarily prosocial, and silence is considered a pro-self behaviour. Voice is primarily prosocial as the community speaks up on behalf of the affected employees who feel psychologically unsafe to engage in voice to prevent them from taking risks or amplify their voices to press for change. Workplace issues that also affect the public serve as leverage for employees. These individuals can garner support from people external to the organisation to hold their leaders to account. In situations where change happens due to collective voice, individuals who remain silent benefit the most as they receive the psychological benefits of change and the protective benefits of silence. The behavioural shifts from voice to silence and silence to voice are suggested to be due to two newly proposed phenomena known as *voice fatigue* and *silence distress*, indicating employees using silence and voice as coping strategies to preserve psychological well-being. The reparation of the psychological contract model captures a newly discovered process in which employees speak up in an effort to seek resolution, to hold the employer accountable, and to allow the opportunity for the employer to repair the broken psychological contract. An additional phenomenon known as *silence-voice blame* describes the act of employers who condemn, blame, or victimise employees for remaining silent or speaking up about workplace issues of concern.

It is imperative to consider that employees who remain silent and those who do not experience change after engaging in voice have higher intentions of leaving the organisation. Many employees who pursue change end up exiting the organisation or getting terminated from their jobs. These can have severe implications on organisational performance and reputation in the longer term. People who remain in employment can experience low levels of engagement, and those indirectly affected by observing the injustice may also leave the organisation. The findings provide insights for individuals where the social expectations outline employees' right to voice, their obligation to use that voice to effect change, and how they can leverage additional power to overturn any power differential. There is potential for future research to examine how psychological well-being is affected throughout their employment, at the point in which there is a shift in employee silence or voice behaviour. This investigation can provide an in-depth understanding of the beneficial and detrimental effects of using silence and voice as coping strategies to an individual's psychological well-being over time.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis provides an understanding of silence and voice in the workplace in relation to employee well-being in the United Kingdom (UK) and Malaysia through mixed methods research. This chapter presents an overview of the thesis by first offering an introduction to the debates central to the thesis. This is followed by presenting the background, research objectives, methodology, and contributions of the thesis. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined to provide a brief introduction of the contents of each chapter.

### 1.2 The Debates Central to the Thesis

In the last two decades, there is a growing body of research on employee silence to complement the research conducted on employee voice (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003, Pinder & Harlos, 2001; Knoll & van Dick, 2013). Although there is a better understanding of the multidimensionality of employee silence and voice through the conceptualisation work of Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003) and more recently Nechanska, Hughes, and Dundon (2020), there is a paucity of research that combines both constructs in empirical research. In the review by Morrison (2014), studies conducted thus far tend to focus on voice and position it as the desired choice compared to silence when considering organisational outcomes and the perceived benefits of voice. However, little is known about the benefits and drawbacks of voice (and silence) to employees and organisations. Further to that, there have been limited studies on its relationship with employee well-being (Knoll & van Dick, 2013) and how the impact may be similar or different in various cultural contexts (Morrison, 2014). This thesis intends to explore the concepts, assumptions, and findings presented in the literature with a focus on the seminal work by Milliken et al. (2003), Dyne et al. (2003), Knoll and van Dick (2013), and Morrison (2014).

Departing from the common approach of emphasising the advantages that employee voice has on organisations, this thesis combines the two constructs of employee silence and employee voice within an empirical research by focusing first on the employee to present a detailed examination into silence and voice in relation to employees' well-being, followed by the implications on organisations. Further to that, it offers an additional perspective by situating the research within two traditionally contrasting cultures, the UK (horizontal individualism) and

Malaysia (vertical collectivism). From an epistemological standpoint, this research acknowledges the importance of investigating how employee silence and voice are socially constructed in different cultures by examining the values attached to each construct to have a nuanced understanding on why employees from different cultural backgrounds remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern. Researchers have investigated the influence of power distance (Botero & van Dyne, 2009) and individualism-collectivism (Morrison, Chen, & Salgado, 2004) on employee voice behaviour, but they did not examine its relationship with employee well-being. Therefore, investigating silence and voice in the workplace from the perspective of an individual in relation to their well-being within their cultural context reframes the voice debate.

The primary aim of this research is to understand the effects of employee silence and voice on an individual's well-being in the UK and Malaysia. The secondary aim is to provide insights into its implications on organisations. To achieve these aims, two research objectives were developed by identifying gaps in conceptual and empirical understanding in the existing literature. The following section provides a background to the thesis that informs the development of the research objectives presented thereafter.

### 1.3 Background to the Research

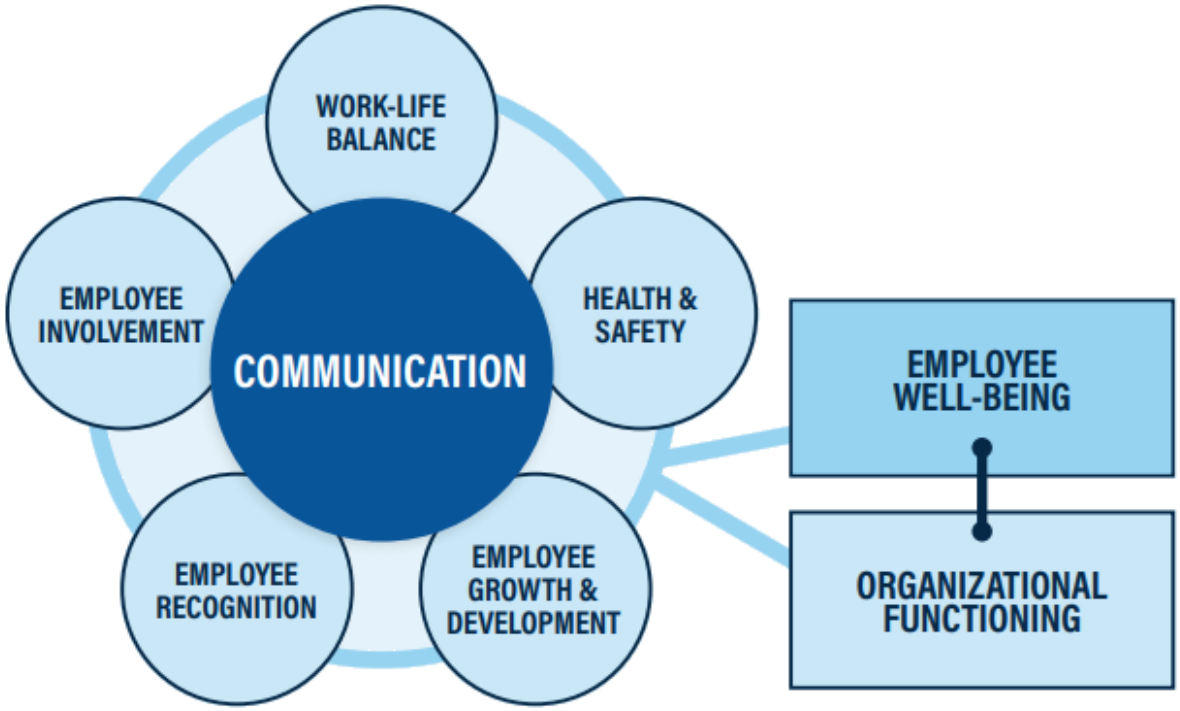
Academics have conducted many studies on voice. However, silence has not received as much attention (Donaghey, Cullinane, Dundon, & Wilkinson, 2011). Silence in the workplace is not uncommon (Milliken et al., 2003) and this serves as an important consideration of the possible benefits that employees are gaining by remaining silent about workplace issues of concern, though possibly at the cost of the organisation (Vemuri, 2019). There is a focus in this current research on workplace issues of concern instead of other types of information that are communicated within organisations, such as ideas and suggestions as these types of information may be more well-received by the management (Morrison, 2014). There are also negative consequences on employees, organisations, and society if workplace issues of concerns are not addressed or go unnoticed (Pope, 2019; Seeger & Ulmer, 2003; The Guardian, 2010).

With the increasing importance placed on employee well-being in the workplace due to the constant change in the macro-environment (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors) impacting organisations, five psychologically healthy workplace practices have been identified that have direct and indirect links to employee well-being and organisational improvements (Grawitch, Gottschalk, & Munz, 2006). These are:

1. Employee involvement
2. Work-life balance
3. Health and safety
4. Employee growth and development
5. Employee recognition

The American Psychological Association (2019) has stated that communication underpins all the five types of psychologically healthy workplace practices (see Figure 1.1). As silence and voice are the two forms of communication that employees engage in at work, an investigation into these constructs is important in understanding the relationship between silence and voice and employee well-being.

**Figure 1.1 Essential Components of a Psychologically Healthy Workplace**




*Source:* American Psychological Association (2019)

Although this research was conceived pre-COVID-19 in 2017, the global pandemic in 2020 changed the course of my research since the world was consumed by a once-in-a-lifetime global health crisis that led to a drastic shift in the employment landscape (Bouziri et al., 2020). There was a conscious decision to incorporate this element into my final study to focus on silence and voice about workplace issues of concern related to the pandemic. It also provided a point of reference for between-country comparisons to understand the similarities and differences of social values surrounding silence and voice in contrasting cultures.

The review of existing literature focused on three main topic areas that constitute this research. The first topic is a review of the concepts of employee silence and voice. The second topic relates to a review on the impact of employee silence and voice on well-being. The third topic relates to the two cultural dimensions of power distance (horizontal-vertical) and individualism-collectivism, and the possible influence of these dimensions on employee silence and voice and well-being in the UK and Malaysia workplace. The review of these topic areas are presented in Chapter 2.

### 1.4 Research Objectives

To build on existing research based on the review of literature, two research objectives were developed:

***Research Objective 1***

*To explore and examine the ways in which remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern can have an impact on employee well-being in the UK and Malaysia.*

Although researchers are focusing more on employee silence in recent years, there is a paucity of research that investigates both employee silence and voice in an empirical study. As communication serves as the foundation of psychologically healthy workplace practices, it is crucial to understand why employees choose to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern and establish the relationship between silence and voice *and* employee well-being. On the basis that the UK and Malaysia are situated in different parts of the world, one in the West and the other in the East, this investigation can review the existing debate on the interpersonal communication differences between people in two contrasting cultures and the impact on the employees in these countries.

***Research Objective 2***

*To explore the relationship between social expectation and an individual's choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern in the UK and Malaysia.*

As the UK and Malaysia are on different ends of the cultural dimension index, this allows for a between-country comparison of employees' experiences of silence and voice. The expression of cultural norms and shared assumptions of reality are often communicated through the media. An exploration of media language can help contextualise the different social expectations that might influence individual behaviour in relation to silence and voice in contrasting cultures. This investigation can enhance our understanding of how employees in

the UK and Malaysia behave and navigate through the processes in the workplace when dealing with the concerns they have.

Research Questions

1. What factors influence employees in making individual choices to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern?
2. How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia?
3. What are the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia?
4. What is the relationship between social expectation and individual choice in relation to silence and voice in the workplace?

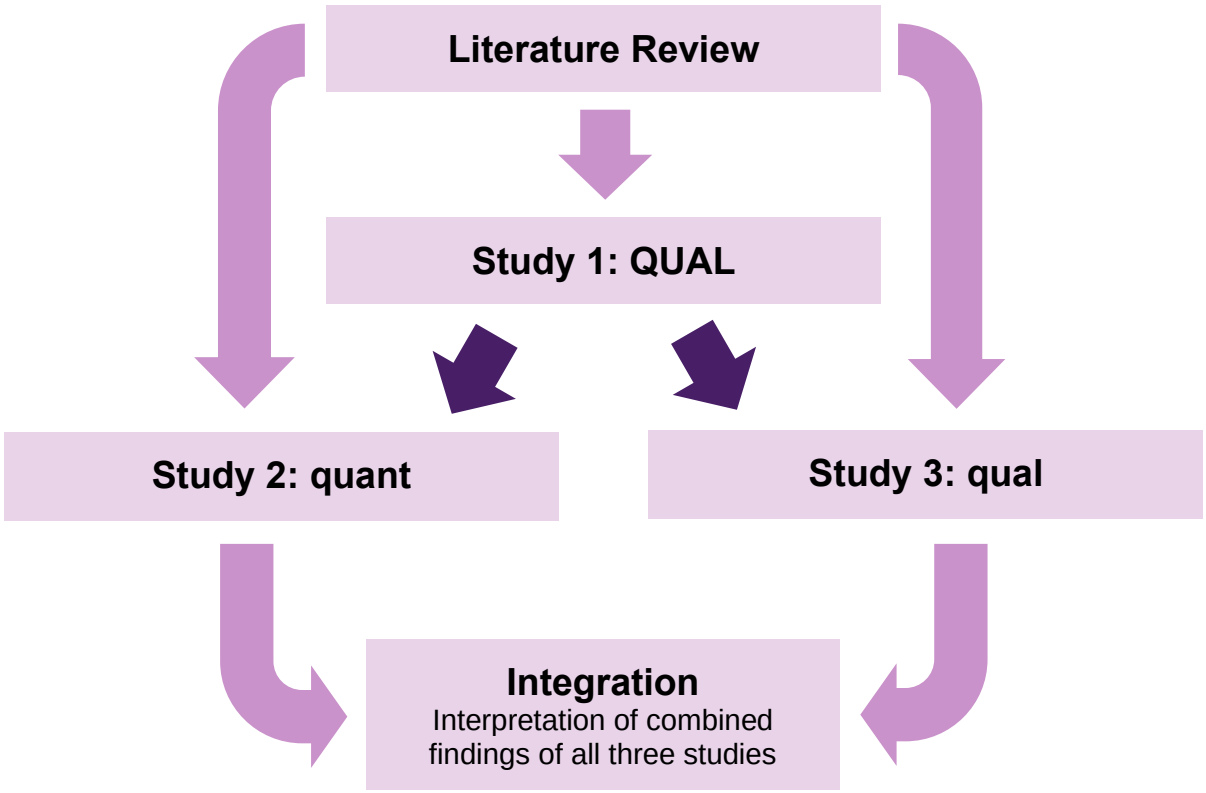
### 1.5 Research Methodology

The epistemological assumption of this research is a combination of two worldviews to gain the knowledge in this topic area, known as pragmatism. Pragmatism is rooted in the idea that there is no single worldview that can provide us with the 'truth' and that the integration of the findings from multiple worldviews is necessary to allow for a more holistic understanding of a phenomenon (Greene, 2007). The pragmatist worldview is focused on addressing the problem at hand and moves away from the dilemma of choosing between one research approach versus another (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Although this research operates from a pragmatist worldview, there is an emphasis on social constructivism over post-positivism due to the aim of the research that focuses primarily on the employee as an individual within an organisation that interacts with their social environment, as well as the need to "understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). The mixed methods approach consists of both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. To address the research questions and hypotheses, three separate studies that are sequentially linked were designed:

- Study 1 involves conducting semi-structured interviews with British and Malaysian participants on their experience of remaining silent and/or speaking up about workplace issues of concern in the organisations that they were working in.
- Study 2 involves recruiting participants with similar criteria to participants in Study 1 to complete an online questionnaire in relation to their silence or voice experience for generalisation of the findings obtained in Study 1 to the UK and Malaysia population.
- Study 3 is a discourse analysis of publicly available online articles to explore in-depth the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia.

The studies are sequentially linked in that the findings from Study 1 informed the development of Study 2. Study 3 was designed to explore findings in Study 1 further, while providing context to the findings in Study 2 (see Figure 1.2). As there is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, inductive and deductive thinking forms the overall research process in obtaining the results for each study and in integrating the findings of all three studies to arrive at the conclusion of this thesis.

**Figure 1.2 Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design**




### 1.6 Contributions of the Thesis

The contribution of the thesis to the literature covers the ways in which employees in the UK and Malaysia navigate the choices that they have to withhold or express their concerns by exploring the impact that the choices have on their well-being. By balancing the focus to investigate both silence and voice, this expands the existing voice debate to understand the reasons why employees remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern, as well as facilitate the identification of the points in which silence and voice have an influence on individual well-being in the UK and Malaysia. The following are the specific contributions of the thesis that advance the existing literature, which will be presented with further details in the discussion:

- A further categorisation of two types of issues that employees remain silent and speak up about identified as *task-related* and *person-related* issues.
- An employee silence and voice categorisation based on the fundamental reasons why individuals remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern.
- A challenge to the voice debate that holds the common assumptions that voice is 'good' and silence is 'bad' since the current research shows that speaking up is not always beneficial, and remaining silent is not entirely detrimental to the individual.
- Behavioural shifts due to *voice fatigue* and *silence distress* indicating employees using silence and voice as coping strategies to preserve psychological well-being.
- The reparation of the psychological contract model.
- The phenomenon known as *silence-voice blame*, where employers condemn, blame, or victimise employees for remaining silent or speaking up about workplace issues of concern.

### 1.7 Thesis Structure

This section provides a preview of the content of each chapter. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 2 consists of three main sections that review the literature around employee silence and voice, employee well-being, and culture. The review of conceptual and empirical studies around employee silence and voice involves exploring the definition of the constructs, their development, and the factors that motivate employees' communicative choices. The second section focuses on reviewing existing studies on the relationship between silence and voice and well-being. This section seeks to understand the influence that work, occupations, and workplace events can have on employee well-being. The third section reviews studies on employee silence and voice that take into consideration culture followed by a brief background of the UK and Malaysia and their historical links, as well as laying out the assumptions of employees' silence and voice behaviours for the two countries according to research on cultural dimensions. The three psychological concepts that serve as underpinning theories for the three main sections are psychological safety, psychological well-being, and the psychological contract. These concepts were used to develop the hypotheses (tested in Study 2) and to discuss the integrated findings of the research.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in this research. The aims and research objectives are set out followed by the research questions formulated to address the research objectives. The philosophical foundations are then presented as a rationale for the

methodological choice followed by the research design that involves an integration of three study methods employing both qualitative and quantitative strands.

Chapter 4 presents the detailed methods and findings of Study 1 that involves analysing data collected through semi-structured interviews. The transcribed data was analysed using the thematic analysis approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013). The exploration involves identifying themes relating to the factors that motivate employees' silence and voice behaviours as well as the impact of these behaviours on employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia. These findings address the first and second research questions.

In Chapter 5, the detailed methods in designing the measurement instrument and collecting the data are described. The results of the online questionnaire analysed using various statistical analyses to test the hypotheses for Study 2 are also presented. The analyses focus primarily on establishing the relationship between the predictor variables (employee silence and voice), interaction variables (perceived support), and the outcome variables (psychological well-being and turnover intention) in the UK and Malaysia. The results address the second research question by providing further evidence to the findings from Study 1.

Chapter 6 is the final study. It presents the detailed methods and findings from a discourse analysis conducted to explore in depth the texts obtained from publicly available online articles published by the mainstream media. The textual analysis involves a detailed examination of the linguistic techniques used to reveal the social values that shaped the employee silence and voice constructs. There is the element of between-country comparison to present its similarities and differences in the UK and Malaysia. The findings, consisting of three categories of discourses, address the third research question.

Chapter 7 is a discussion of the findings for each of the three studies to address the individual research questions. The findings of Study 1 address the first research question; the findings of Study 1 and 2 address the second research question; the findings of Study 3 address the third research question; and the integration of the findings of all three studies address the fourth research question.

Chapter 8, which is the final chapter, outlines what is new in terms of the contribution of this thesis and considers the practical implications of the research findings for organisations and individuals. I also provide an overall reflection of my role as a researcher in contributing to the findings of this research, with concluding remarks on the directions for future research.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing literature related to the constructs examined in this research to identify areas of contribution through the research questions posed. In the first section of this chapter, I provide an overview of the definition and forms of employee silence and voice and the factors that motivate silence and voice behaviours. This is followed by discussing the impact that employee silence and employee voice can have on an individual's well-being and the workplace contexts and conditions that may lead to positive or negative outcomes. I then present the nuances of employee silence and voice by viewing it from a cultural perspective within the context of cultural variation between the UK and Malaysia. Finally, I discuss the three psychological concepts that came to light as a result of Study 1 by reviewing the literature on psychological safety, psychological well-being and the psychological contract.

### 2.2 Silence and Voice in the Workplace

The exchange of information through interactions between people in the workplace is crucial to sustain and develop an organisation. In daily work interactions, voice is the fundamental form of communication to exchange information such as ideas, suggestions, and concerns (Morrison, 2011). Over the years, there has been an increasing acceptance of the benefits of employee voice (Wilkinson, Dundon, Marchington, & Ackers 2004) and the negative implications of silence (Vemuri, 2019) with organisations implementing ways to encourage employee engagement (De Vries, 2011; Seki, Ishikawa, & Yamazaki, 2014). Although strategies and policies have been put in place by organisations to encourage employees to exercise voice, silence about workplace issues of concern is still widespread in organisations.

- In North America, only 3.2% out of 737 employees from a research university reported mistreatments (Salin, Tenhiälä, Roberge, & Berdahl, 2014).
- In the US, 85% out of 40 respondents felt unable to speak up to their superiors about workplace issues of concern (Milliken et al., 2003).
- In the UK, of the 575 healthcare employees who experienced workplace bullying in the North East of England, only 3-14% reported to the authority, based on the type of bullying behaviour (Carter et al., 2013).

Thus far, researchers have categorised the content of the message either as an *idea*, known as promotive (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012) or suggestion-focused (Morrison, 2011) voice, or a *problem*, known as prohibitive (Liang et al., 2012), problem-focused (Morrison, 2011), or remedial (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2008) voice. In this research, I focus specifically on workplace issues of concern instead of other types of information that are communicated within organisations, such as ideas and suggestions as these types of information may be more well-received by the management (Morrison, 2014). There are also negative consequences on employees, organisations, and society if workplace issues of concerns are not addressed or go unnoticed (Pope, 2019; Seeger & Ulmer, 2003; The Guardian, 2010).

As employee silence is ambiguous, it has only gained prominence as an emerging area of research in the last two decades due to it being known as a challenging area to study. In comparison to voice, it is more difficult to attribute employee motives for silence since it is a covert behaviour (Dyne et al., 2003). Researchers have attempted to investigate this construct further by conceptualising the different forms of silence and voice in the workplace.

Employee Silence and Voice

Researchers involved in workplace studies refer to silence and voice behaviours of individuals at work as employee silence and employee voice. In examining the definitions, there is an array of literature proposing different meanings to the constructs. Silence has been defined simplistically as the absence of voice, and voice is employees' expression of their views. However, researchers suggest that employee silence and voice are complex as communication involves exchanges between people from diverse backgrounds interacting under various circumstances for different reasons (see Table 2.1).

In examining these definitions that are based on hierarchical organisational structures, there is a consensus amongst scholars that communicating workplace issues of concern is an upward communication (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). It often involves two parties of different hierarchical statuses or positions of power, with the person receiving the information often perceived by the individual expressing the concern to possess the capability to effect change (Detert & Burris 2007; Morrison, 2011; Tangirala & Ramanujam 2008a; Van Dyne & LePine 1998). As these situations often involve a superior-subordinate relationship, power differences under such circumstances often limit the type of issues that employees can communicate to their line managers or leadership team (Milliken et al., 2003).

In the study by Milliken et al. (2003), they interviewed 40 full-time employees from various industries in the United States to explore issues that employees do not communicate upwards.

The result indicates that participants felt unable to raise issues related to colleague's or supervisor's competence and behaviour as well as management-related decisions. The top three problems that employees felt comfortable speaking up about were related to organisational processes or performance, pay or pay equity, and company policies or decisions. The findings provide preliminary suggestions that employees felt better able to voice concerns that do not involve other individuals or people in higher positions in the organisation. Miliken et al.'s (2003) research warrants the need to explore further if there is a dichotomy between issues that employees can voice, and issues that are considered 'off-limits', as well as how this is determined.

**Table 2.1 Definitions of Employee Silence and Voice**

| **Form of communication** | **Definition** | **Author** |
|---|---|---|
| Employee Silence | "the withholding of any form of genuine expression about the individual's behavioral, cognitive and/or affective evaluations of his or her organizational circumstances to persons who are perceived to be capable of effecting change or redress." (p. 334) | Pinder and Harlos (2001) |
| Employee Silence | "the withholding of ideas, suggestions, or concerns about people, products, or processes that might have been communicated verbally to someone inside the organization with the perceived authority to act" (p. 166-167). | Kish-Gephart, Detert, Tervino, & Edmonson, (2009) |
| Employee Voice | "the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organisational affairs about issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners." (p. 5) | Wilkinson, Donaghey, Dundon, & Freeman (2014) |
| Employee Voice | "informal and discretionary communication by an employee of ideas, suggestions, concerns, information about problems, or opinions about work-related issues to persons who might be able to take appropriate action, with the intent to bring about improvement or change." (p. 174) | Morrison (2014) |

Further to that, the definitions suggest that silence is a conscious decision on the part of the employee to withhold information (Pinder & Harlos, 2001), and voice is a voluntary expression of important information (Morrison, 2014). Both of these definitions indicate that silence and voice are individual choices made by the employee. However, there have been instances where employers use non-disclosure agreements to prevent employees from speaking up about workplace issues of concern, even in situations where employees wish to break the silence (Nicholl, 2019; Zhai, 2020). There also exists professional codes of conduct that require employees in certain occupations to exercise voice (Bailey, 2011). The consequences of not exercising voice may involve the termination of employment and suspension from the register if employees do not raise concerns (HCPC, 2016). Even then, silence is still pervasive within the medical community where patient safety is at risk (Pope, 2019). Although research reports that employees want multiple channels to voice their concerns (Bryson, Gomez, & Willman, 2010), it is unclear whether organisations with a range of voice structures are more likely to yield voice. The implications of speaking up can at times be prohibitively severe that employees choose not to speak up. Hence, the concept of individual choice and free will is debatable. Furthermore, expectations of their behaviour may dictate their action, and the circumstances that they are in can also influence their decision. This mismatch between cognition and behaviour requires further exploration to enhance our understanding of the factors influencing employees' decision to engage in silence or voice behaviours (Detert & Edmonson, 2011; Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017).

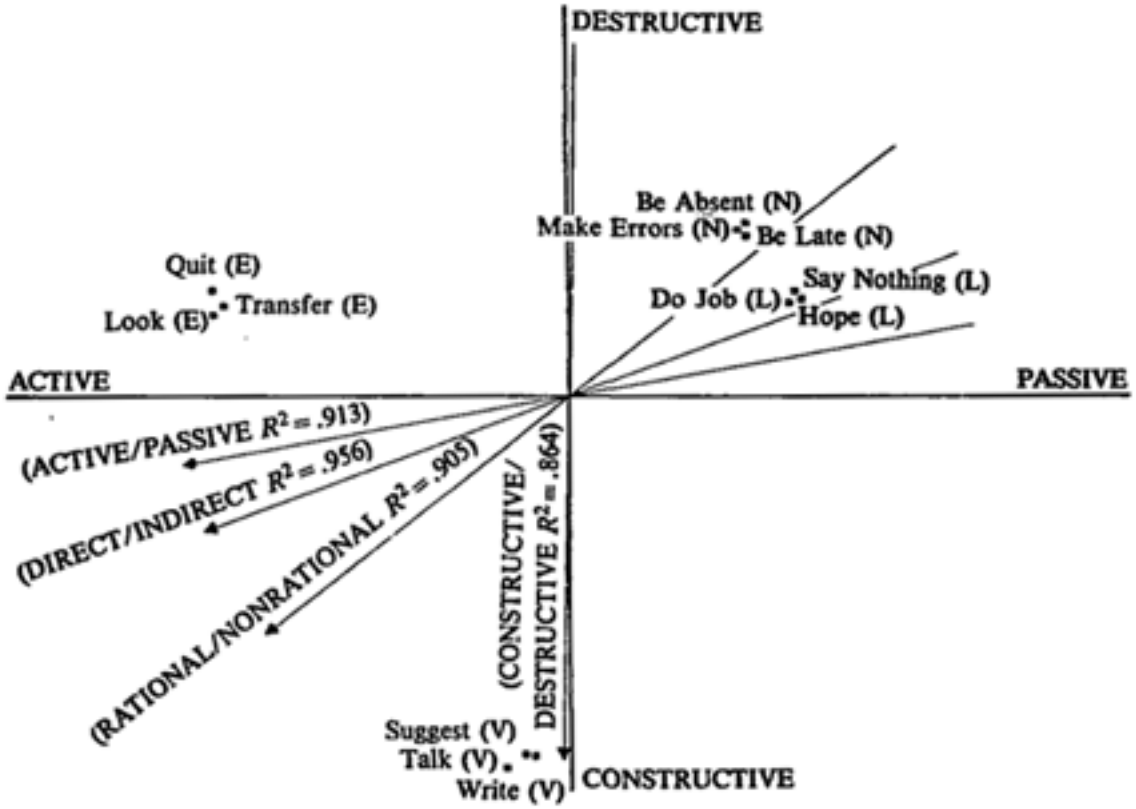
When discussing voice, many scholars refer to Hirschman's (1970) theory – Exit, Voice and Loyalty to describe consumers' responses in product markets as the pioneering voice research. Although this work is paramount in the history of voice research, the concept of voice has been around for more than two hundred years, dating back to the industrial revolution (Kaufman, 2014). The study of voice has evolved over the years, and Hirschman's work has been influential in serving as an initial point of discussion to explore the different types of employee engagement. Farrell (1983) was among the scholars who expanded Hirschman's theory by including Neglect to form Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect, also known as the EVLN model, to describe employees' responses to job dissatisfaction.

The model presents four theoretical categories characterised by a set of three specific behaviours within each of the categories (see Figure 2.1). Exit is considered active and destructive, voice is active and constructive, loyalty is passive and somewhat destructive, and neglect is passive and destructive.

- *Exit* is characterised by the behaviour of getting transferred to another job, looking for another job, and deciding to leave the company.

- *Voice* involves the act of putting a note in the suggestion box hoping to correct the problem, writing a letter to find out what can be done, and talking to supervisor to try and make things better.
- *Loyalty* includes saying nothing to others hoping that things will work out, quietly doing one's job and letting the higher ups make the decisions, and waiting patiently and hoping the problem will solve itself.
- *Neglect* is characterised by behaviours that involve coming in late to avoid the problems, becoming less interested and making errors, and calling in sick and not dealing with what is happening.

**Figure 2.1 Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect Model**




*Source:* Farrell (1983)

While the EVLN model provides a better understanding of employee behaviour in response to their job dissatisfaction, there are a few caveats. First, the categorisation of the behaviours as constructive, destructive, active, and passive is simplistic. Secondly, the researcher interprets the categories from an organisational standpoint, whether the behaviour appears beneficial or detrimental to the organisation and not the individual. For example, an active and constructive action such as writing an email to the leadership team about a task-related issue related to

the line manager's job incompetence may be beneficial to the organisation but destructive to their career development if there is a mishandling of the issue. The outcome of the employee voice behaviour may lead to them employing active and destructive behaviours such as exiting the organisation (Turnley & Feldman, 1999), which would be detrimental to the organisation but better for the individual in terms of career progression. Also, passive and destructive behaviours such as employees not reporting poor work ethics may work to their advantage to get on with their daily tasks, which helps maintain their work productivity though this may not be perceived as beneficial to the organisation's performance. The impact of employee silence and voice behaviours on the individual is important to note as it assists in effecting change and increasing organisational performance and reputation (Milliken, Schipani, Bishara, & Prado, 2015). It allows for organisation modifications to happen, such as a change in managerial behaviours and improvement in the voice processes. These changes can contribute to making the organisation a safe place to engage in voice behaviour.

Although the concept of employee silence intuitively suggests a lack of voice and therefore does not appear to demand independent attention, Dyne et al. (2003) have put forward the importance of viewing employee silence and voice as "separate, multidimensional constructs" (p. 1360). When making a comparison between the two constructs, Dyne et al. (2003) posit that the difference between silence and voice is the purpose behind why employees choose to remain silent or to speak up (see Figure 2.2), rather than focusing on the simplistic notion of absence or presence of voice.

In Dyne et al.'s (2003) conceptual understanding of silence and voice, they presented three distinct forms of employee silence and voice on why employees decide to remain silent or speak up to compare the differences between the two constructs. For example, acquiescent silence is the withholding of ideas due to employees not feeling able to make a difference. On the other hand, acquiescent voice is the expression of an idea that supports the management's line of thinking or agreeing to the group based on the feeling that changing the status quo is impossible. In this instance, the presence of acquiescent silence is not the absence of acquiescent voice, as can at times be simplistically defined in the literature. These suggest that both silence and voice can be present at the same time, which adds to the complex nature of these two constructs that demands further exploration. As put forward by Detert and Edmonson (2011), "an individual might speak frequently yet withhold information or opinions about important problems from bosses because he/she believes these ideas would not be well received" (p. 462). Furthermore, giving equal consideration to opposing constructs also increases theoretical precision and increases its utility (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017).

**Figure 2.2 Forms of Silence and Voice**

| Type of Behaviour → / Employee Motive ↓ | EMPLOYEE SILENCE: Intentionally withholding work-related ideas, information, and opinions | EMPLOYEE VOICE: Intentionally expressing work-related ideas, information, and opinions |
|---|---|---|
| **Disengaged Behaviour**<br>Based on Resignation<br>Feeling unable to make a difference | **ACQUIESCENT SILENCE**<br>Examples:<br>Withholding ideas based on resignation<br>Keeping opinions to self due to low self-efficacy to make a difference | **ACQUIESCENT VOICE**<br>Examples:<br>Expressing supportive ideas based on resignation<br>Agreeing with the group due to low self-efficacy to make a difference |
| **Self-Protective Behaviour**<br>Based on Fear<br>Feeling afraid and personally at risk | **DEFENSIVE SILENCE**<br>Examples:<br>Withholding information on problems based on fear<br>Omitting facts to protect the self | **DEFENSIVE VOICE**<br>Examples:<br>Expressing ideas that shift attention elsewhere based on fear<br>Proposing ideas that focus on others to protect the self |
| **Other-Oriented Behaviour**<br>Based on Cooperation<br>Feeling cooperative and altruistic | **PROSOCIAL SILENCE**<br>Examples:<br>Withholding confidential information based on cooperation<br>Protecting proprietary knowledge to benefit the organization | **PROSOCIAL VOICE**<br>Examples:<br>Expressing solutions to problems based on cooperation<br>Suggesting constructive ideas for change to benefit the organization |

*Source:* Dyne et al. (2003)

Following that, this calls for the need to move beyond conceptualising employee silence and voice to conduct empirical studies in workplaces. Many empirical studies examine the two constructs separately, investigating mainly employee voice. Nevertheless, there has been more focus on employee silence in the last two decades (Knoll & van Dick, 2013; Milliken et al., 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b). Those that consider the two constructs together are mainly conceptual papers (Morrison 2014; Nechanska et al., 2020; Dyne et al., 2003). However, in one recent study by Breevaart, Bohle, Pletzer, and Medina (2020), the research findings emphasised the importance of studying both constructs simultaneously. The study showed how events that occurred weekly influenced the silence and voice behaviours of employees. These events then lead to positive or negative feelings that can further influence individuals' silence and voice behaviours in the following week. The findings highlight the need to explore moderating factors that influence employees' decisions to remain silent and speak up to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon. The research suggested the influence of managers (who are considered actors in positions of power involved in an upward communication) in employees' silence and voice behaviours. Admittedly, there is limited research investigating the constructs of employee silence and voice within one study (Nechanska et al., 2020). Therefore, this research takes the approach of explicitly incorporating both constructs of employee silence and voice to gain a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Motivators of Employee Silence and Voice

Researchers have examined the concept of employee silence beyond the conscious choice of the individual to remain silent to take into consideration non-conscious processes that may have perpetuated silence through the absence of voice structures in organisations to allow employee voice to prevail (Donaghey et al., 2011). The term “unintentional silence” was introduced by Cullinane and Donaghey (2014, p. 402) as a form of silence that is unconsciously introduced by the management of an organisation due to forces external to the organisation (Nechanska et al., 2020). It is imperative to consider this point since unintentional silence suggests a passive form of behaviour that may be caused by societal or group norms that go unnoticed in organisations. For example, the lack of voice structures within organisations may be the result of management perceptions that employees are comfortable speaking up about workplace issues of concern to their line managers naturally as they occur, or that the management do not require involvement from their employees regarding matters that are not within their scope of responsibility (Cullinane & Donaghey, 2014). For this reason, Nechanska et al. (2020) put forward the need to consider influencing factors beyond the individual and organisation, such as broader social structures and construct to understand both social and psychological antecedents of employee voice and silence to have a more reflective understanding of the phenomenon. There is also the view that employee silence and voice behaviours in the workplace resulted from socially acquired beliefs. Individuals form “knowledge structures” (Detert & Edmonson, 2011, p. 462) meant to assist them in navigating situations in social hierarchies where speaking up about concerns to people in positions of power may appear risky.

In the field of organisational behaviour, Morrison (2014) conducted a review of existing empirical studies to identify the variables that motivate and inhibit employee voice as presented in Table 2.2. The motivators and inhibitors can mainly be categorised into individual or organisational factors. In analysing the table headings, the factors that motivate voice are presented in positive terms, whereas factors that inhibit voice are mostly presented in negative terms. First, by presenting the factors as motivators and ‘inhibitors’ of voice, there is a negative connotation attached to silence. Secondly, it also assumes that the employee has the intention to speak up if the opportunity arises. There appears to be an unequal representation given to voice and silence. This issue serves as an opportunity to explore the usage of language surrounding employee silence and voice in this current research to allow for a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon since language has a significant role in constructing ideas surrounding concepts (Johnstone, 2018). The way in which silence and voice are perceived socially may influence the beliefs surrounding these constructs within organisations. As posited by Dyne et al. (2003), factors that motivate voice could also be based on resignation

or low self-efficacy (powerlessness). These are negative affects that may be jointly motivated by fear of negative consequences to self (Donovan, O'Sullivan, Doyle, & Garvey, 2016). Hence, voice is not always positive as promoted.

**Table 2.2 Variables that can Motivate or Inhibit Voice**

| | **Motivators** | **Inhibitors** |
|---|---|---|
| Individual dispositions | Extraversion<br>Proactive personality<br>Assertiveness<br>Conscientiousness<br>Duty orientation<br>Customer orientation | Achievement orientation |
| Job and organizational attitudes and perceptions | Organizational identification<br>Work-group identification<br>Felt obligation for change<br>Job satisfaction<br>Role breadth<br>Control or influence<br>Organizational support | Detachment<br>Powerlessness |
| Emotions, beliefs, and schemas | Anger<br>Psychological safety | Fear<br>Futility<br>Image or career risks |
| Supervisor and leader behavior | Openness<br>Consultation<br>Leader-member exchange<br>Transformational<br>Leadership<br>Ethical leadership<br>Leader influence | Abusive leadership |
| Other contextual factors | Group voice climate<br>Caring climate<br>Formal voice mechanisms | Job and social stressors<br>Climate of fear or silence<br>Instrumental climate<br>Hierarchical structure<br>Change-resistant structure |

*Source:* Morrison (2014)

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety was explored because this psychological concept addresses the importance of supervisor and the organisation as influencing factors of employee silence and voice behaviours.

The concept of psychological safety was historically discussed in the 1960s within the context of organisational change in relation to the extent that individuals feel secure and confident in managing change (Schein & Bennis, 1965). Scholars have since defined the theory to describe perceptions on an individual level (Kahn, 1990) and shared beliefs on a team level (Edmondson, 1999), which were instrumental in the development and understanding of the psychological safety construct in workplaces (Newman et al., 2017). Kahn's (1990) definition focuses more on engagement and disengagement of self from tasks, and Edmondson's (1999) definition applies more to team learning and innovation as outcomes of increased voice behaviour.

In Kahn's (1990) study, he explored the psychological conditions and moments in which people engage and disengage themselves throughout their workdays. In situations where psychological safety was present, employees felt the "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 705). The experiences employees described were feelings that the situations are trustworthy, secure, predictable and clear in terms of consequences to their behaviour. He put forward that the main factor that contributes to creating these situations is the interpersonal interaction between the employee and the people who are part of the social system within the organisation.

When examining this factor from an employee voice perspective in relation to communicating workplace issues of concern that involves upward communication, perceptions of psychological safety is therefore dependent on the interaction between two people in a dyadic relationship: the person with 'less power' (employee), raising concerns to the person with 'more power' (supervisor) to act and make changes to improve the situation. According to Kahn's (1990) definition, feelings of psychological safety within this context can be seen as the trust that the employee's self-image, status, or career will not be affected. Regardless of whether this is through the actions of the supervisor or the organisation if the employee chooses to engage in voice behaviour by speaking up about workplace issues of concern. From an employee silence perspective, it raises the question of whether the employee's self-image, status, or career will also be unaffected. In assigning accountability, blame often falls on employees who do not speak up about concerns due to a lack of psychological safety

instead of the management. The absence of psychological safety is a strong disincentive to speaking up due to fear of negative consequences (Bell et al., 2011). Hence, it is important to investigate the reason why employees engage in silent behaviour and if it is due to the influence of the lack of support for voice from the people in positions of more power.

Within the definitions of employee silence and voice, individuals who are seen as capable of effecting change and hold the power to make improvements have been referred to as "managers and owners" (Wilkinson et al., 2014, p. 5). However, they are more commonly referred to by the terms 'supervisor' and 'organisation' in the literature. In the systematic review by Newman et al. (2017), supervisor and organisational support were found to be antecedents of psychological safety, with psychological safety mediating the relationship between support and employee silence and voice behaviours. Specifically, employees' perceptions of psychological safety in dyadic relationships have been found to lead to more voice behaviours (Bienefeld & Grote, 2014; Detert & Burris, 2007) and fewer employee silence behaviours (Brinsfield, 2013).

In a study by May, Gilson, and Harter (2004), supportive supervisor relations were positively associated with psychological safety. Employees exhibited increased engagement in their work when the level of psychological safety is high. The supportive relationship can also have a positive impact on the shared belief of psychological safety at a team level as posited by Edmondson (1999), which increases voice behaviour. When employees perceive that a positive work environment exists, they have a stronger sense of psychological safety, feeling confident speaking up without the fear that they would face any negative consequences (Sing, Winkel, & Selvarajan, 2013). This phenomenon can also be viewed from the perspective of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) where supportive supervisor relations or inclusive leadership can be seen to bridge the gap and lead to an in-group perception between the employee (individuals with less power) and the supervisor (individuals with more power). Inclusive leadership has been shown to lead to perceptions of psychological safety that can result in a positive association with voice behaviour (Guo et al., 2020). Studies have shown that feelings of exclusion and outgroup perception resulting from supervisors' unsupportive behaviours and social undermining are positively associated with employee silence (Jung & Yoon, 2019). This result suggests that valuing employees' voice through supportive supervisor behaviours can overcome the differences in power status and create a sense of psychological safety.

In discussing employee silence and voice in more recent studies, and in line with Kahn's (1990) study, fear has been commonly reported as the reason why individuals remain silent

in the workplace (Brinsfield, 2013; Detert & Burris, 2007; Knoll, Hall, & Weigelt, 2019; Milliken, 2003). This finding suggests that speaking up about concerns involves a high level of risk. Within hierarchical organisations, in unpacking the role of supervisors, they hold the power to make decisions that can affect an employee's career. Low levels of support from the supervisor and the organisation may lead to feelings of unpredictability as employees cannot anticipate if speaking up about the concerns may lead to the supervisor and the organisation taking the issue in a negative manner. These may reinforce the implicit theories employees have that speaking up may result in being overlooked for promotion or selection for projects, as well as the fear of losing their jobs (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). How supervisors respond to employees' concerns is crucial in ensuring that employees do not feel that their needs are unfulfilled, leading to employees feeling a sense of job insecurity. Employee silence is an immediate consequence of job insecurity that leads to further engagements in employee silence behaviours (Breevaart et al., 2020). In situations of unpredictability and control over employees' future, employees engage in silence behaviour as it is perceived as a way to protect their personal resources and avoid risking their job, which employees have engaged in cognitive processes and 'calculated' as being more costly in the longer term (Morrison, 2014).

Researchers have proposed four elements that lead to employee perception of supportive supervisor and organisational behaviours. These are perceptions that the supervisor and organisation care about the employee's opinions, employee's well-being, consider employee's goals and values, and show concern for the employee (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Therefore, it is no surprise that the presence of such support would be positively associated with employees' voice behaviour, and the absence of this support would be positively associated with employee silence behaviour. However, this requires investigation to examine if and how supervisors and organisational support are associated with the different forms of silence and voice behaviour.

### 2.3 Employee Silence and Voice from a Well-being Perspective

It can be observed from the definitions of employee silence and voice that employees perceive to have valid reasons behind why they withhold or express workplace issues of concern. When examining the employee voice construct, there is a focus on bringing about change, which forms the purpose of speaking up about workplace issues of concern. Employee voice has been suggested to have a positive impact in three ways (Wilkinson, Dundon, Marchington, & Acker, 2004):

- Improvements in employee attitudes and behaviours, loyalty, commitment, and co-operative relations by acknowledging employee contributions,

- Improvements in the way people are managed when employee ideas and suggestions based on their knowledge and experience are tapped into,
- Improvements in organisational performance through an increase in individual performance and productivity, lower absenteeism, and the development of new businesses.

Similar to this research, most scholars described the direct benefits that employee voice has on the individual, which then leads to benefits to the organisation. At an organisational level, it can increase organisational effectiveness and ultimately productivity, which may contribute to sustainable improvements in the company's financial performance (Dale, Cooper, & Wilkinson, 1997). At an individual level, it can enhance employees' well-being through increased commitment, employee morale, and job satisfaction (Grawitch et al., 2006). Therefore, communication in the form of employee voice is a central component that underpins the five indicators of healthy workplace practices as part of the theoretical model of The American Psychological Association's Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program (APA, 2019). Furthermore, based on the benefits outlined by Wilkinson et al. (2004), the value to individuals describe elements found in the concept of psychological well-being. I will present existing studies on the impact that each construct (firstly silence and then voice) has on employee well-being.

Employee Silence and Well-being

According to a conceptual understanding of the effects of employee silence by Perlow and Williams (2003, p. 53), "Silence can exact a high psychological price on individuals, generating feelings of humiliation, pernicious anger, resentment, and the like that, if unexpressed, contaminate every interaction, shut down creativity, and undermine productivity". The impact was described in two stages, from employees experiencing negative emotions and perceiving their work experience negatively, to the reduction of quality in how employees respond to others and work. Even though employee silence has been gaining more attention, with studies conducted to define the different forms of silence and its consequences, a more in-depth understanding is required to have a better grasp of how employee silence affects an individual's well-being. The continual expansion of the research area provides insights into how silence could have varying degrees of negative consequences such as strain, stress, and poor well-being (Creed, 2003; Gavin, 2018; Knoll & van Dick, 2013; Morrison, 2014). Further to that, individual acts of silence can become self-reinforcing, producing norms of silence within work units and organisations that can be highly dysfunctional and difficult to break (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Perlow & Repenning, 2009).

The findings from a highly cited qualitative study on employee silence conducted by Miliken et al. (2003) suggested a range of negative consequences that employee silence can have on employees. From their interviews with 40 employees who a majority worked in the services industry, 85% of participants did not feel able to speak up to their superiors about an issue of concern that they considered important. The negative emotion of fear was a common response offered by respondents as a reason for silence, with 30% feared being labelled or viewed negatively, 27.5% feared damaging a relationship, and 25% feared retaliation and punishment. Although the study by Milliken et al. (2003) did not explore the direct consequences that fear can have on employees, according to scholars, fear in expressing oneself and its associated emotional demands can cause psychological distress (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Furthermore, fear has been suggested to lead to a culture of silence (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009), and this gives rise to a vicious cycle that may increase the intensity of fear if the situation goes unaddressed, which can worsen employees' well-being. This research has been pivotal in foregrounding this field of study and helped surface employee silence as an issue that requires increasing discussion in management studies and organisational behaviour due to its impact.

Although the literature is dominated by findings that report the negative consequences of employee silence, some researchers have hypothesised the potential benefits of silence on employee well-being. In the study by Knoll and van Dick (2013), they examined if there are differences in the effects of different forms of employee silence on well-being. To do this, they expanded the initial introduction of acquiescence and quiescence silence by Pinder and Harlos (2001) to include prosocial and opportunistic silence. Remaining silent for prosocial reasons was considered an altruistic act and thus may lead to better well-being. However, the findings showed that prosocial silence (not reporting colleagues' wrongdoings to protect important relationships) was positively related to cognitive and emotional strain, possibly due to feelings of dissonance caused by not reporting colleagues' or the work group's wrongdoing. This form of silence was hypothesised to be positively related to well-being due to the positive effects experienced by colleagues or the workgroup for protecting them but was actually shown to be negatively related to well-being. The study also put forward opportunistic silence as a form of employee silence that can lead to better well-being. However, although opportunistic silence (remaining silent to achieve a personal advantage) was also hypothesised to be negatively related to strain and positively related to well-being, this form of silence reported the lowest score in well-being, and employees experienced strain as well. The research by Knoll and van Dick (2013) was the first to test different forms of employee silence in a survey study on the possible benefits of employee silence on well-being but did not yield the results predicted.

Although the results support the notion that silence is 'bad' and therefore voice is 'good', other studies have shown inconclusive findings to further support this assumption.

In a more recent study by Knoll, Hall, and Weigelt (2019), they also investigated the effects of employee silence on well-being. The more voluntary forms of silence, which are prosocial and opportunistic, have been shown not to have any significant effects on employee burnout (depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion, and perceptions of reduced personal accomplishments), which is different from the result reported by Knoll and van Dick (2013). In these two studies, moderating factors such as supervisor and organisational support were not considered, but as discussed earlier, these factors are important variables to consider due to the definition of employee silence and have also been identified as critical influencers of voice and silence as reported by Kahn (1990), Milliken et al. (2003), and Morrison (2014).

Silence may be an alternative form of coping mechanism for employees to preserve their well-being in situations that are considered stressful. Under adverse circumstances, managers who exert the type of power known as abusive supervision (also referred to as dysfunctional leadership behaviour), can result in employee silence due to emotional exhaustion (Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2014). The various studies discussed in this section call for exploration to better understand how each form of silence affects employee well-being in the workplace under different situational contexts. There is potential in this current research to explore how supervisors and organisations affect employee well-being with regard to remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern. It can increase analytical precision when accurate predictor and outcome variables are determined through a qualitative study before testing these relationships using quantitative analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Employee Voice and Well-being

Studies have shown evidence that employee voice can have both positive and negative impact on well-being. In terms of positive impact, the research found that expressing one's feelings, as opposed to containing them in oneself, has mental and physical health benefits (Pennebaker, 1997). In this instance, employee voice may be a form of coping mechanism to improve employees' well-being.

Many organisations have acknowledged the importance of ensuring that employees have the opportunity to voice their opinions and are involved in effecting change. Employee involvement (EI) is one example of an intervention that large organisations, particularly in manufacturing sectors commonly implement to allow front line employees to participate in making decisions and solving problems that directly affect their job (Kobayashi, Kaneyoshi, Yokota, &

Kawakami, 2008). EI aims to create psychologically healthy workplaces (Seki et al., 2014) and has shown notable benefits to employees. These include increased job satisfaction, commitment, and employee morale, leading to improved employee well-being (Tsutsumi, Nagami, Yoshikawa, Kogi, & Kawakami, 2009). Although this intervention does not include general workplace issues of concern, this serves as an initial indication that when the ability to speak up extends to workplace issues of concern that may not be directly related to tasks, it influences employee well-being positively. Further to that, the critical aspect that is rarely investigated is if speaking up in itself may lead to improved well-being as suggested by Seki et al. (2014). This may provide a different perspective to employee voice by acknowledging it as a possible intervention to directly improve employee well-being, and to investigate the support system required to facilitate voice in organisations.

The literature on disclosure of invisible social identities provided considerable insights into the impact of employee voice on well-being. Studies related to mental health and sexual orientation have presented findings that showed the benefits and negative consequences of disclosure to well-being.

Jones (2011) did a review of existing studies on disclosure of mental illnesses in the workplace that found evidence of the advantages and disadvantages to the employees' well-being. In some studies, disclosure led to a sense of safety (Gioa & Brekke, 2003) and improved superior-subordinate relationship (Rollins et al., 2002), while other studies reported difficulty in integrating normally into the workplace (Goldberg, Killeen, & O'Day, 2005) and receiving ill treatment from their supervisors (Baron, 2002; Pandya et al., 2010).

In another example, when the institutional framework does not encourage raising issues of certain content and nature, speaking up may lead to poor well-being. A qualitative study conducted by Creed (2003) with eight gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) Protestant Ministers explored the impact that disclosure of sexual orientation has on the ministers' well-being. While self-disclosure was in line with their principles of integrity and may lead to a more consistent way of living, self-disclosure also causes pain. Even though Creed (2003) believes that his study may depart far from the norm of management studies, it provides insights for the field of organisational behavioural studies. The findings suggest that depending on the type of issue employees raise and the values held by members of an organisation, there could be different consequences to an individual's well-being. It is important to note that the values held by the employee may be a deciding factor to voice, as concealment about their identity causes conflict within the individual when there is a difference between what they practice and what they 'preach'. This study also sheds light on how self-authorisation as a result of the

knowledge that individuals have about their organisation, people that they interact with within the social system of the organisation, as well as their values and beliefs influence their choice to remain silent or speak up about concerns that are important to the employee. This result offers insights into how individuals make informed choices on whether to remain silent or to speak up and the influence their personal choice can have on their well-being. There could also be significant constraints imposed by the management that removes employees out of the voice process (Donaghey et al., 2011) that requires investigation.

When discussing voice in the workplace, employee empowerment is a central component. Trickett (1991) relates empowerment to the "feeling of being heard" (p. 141), and empowered employees are more in control of their environment as they feel confident (House, 1998). It is imperative to understand here how being heard is defined. The support system is essential to facilitate employees in getting their voices heard as merely speaking up may not contribute to better employee well-being if the organisation does not truly value voice nor provide a psychologically safe environment for employees to voice their concerns. Researchers have termed this as "pseudo voice", where managers allow employees to speak up about their concerns without the intention to consider making any changes (de Vries, Jehn, & Terwel, 2012, p. 221). This concept suggests that the feeling of being heard is perceived when managers and organisations take legitimate actions to change and improve the situation in relation to the concerns raised by the employees.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being as a subset of the well-being concept was reviewed further in relation to employees' sense of self and relations with others. Here, there is a focus on discussing the relationship between change and employee psychological well-being.

In examining the definitions of silence and voice, the intent to bring about change and improvement by speaking up have appeared in many of the definitions proposed by researchers in the review by Mowbray, Wilkinson, and Tse (2015). This is in addition to the definitions of employee silence and voice presented earlier in this chapter in Table 2.1:

"any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions or protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion." (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30).

“promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge needed *to improve* rather than merely criticize. Voice is making innovative suggestions *for change* and recommending modifications to standard procedures even when others disagree” (Van Dyne and LePine 1998, p. 109).

“discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues *with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning*” (Morrison 2011, p. 375).

These definitions suggest that not achieving the desired outcome, which is the intended change or perceived improvement may lead to poor employee well-being. The findings of Study 1 suggest that psychological well-being is a concept that should be measured in Study 2 since the interview data reflect elements that can be found in psychological well-being. In understanding the concept further, psychological well-being is a branch of well-being that could be negatively affected if employees who raise their concerns do not experience change or improvements as a result of voice.

A large part of the eudaimonic tradition of well-being is based on "living life in a full and deeply satisfying way", termed as psychological well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2008, p. 1). In 1989, Ryff proposed measures of psychological well-being that consists of six scales: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Autonomy emphasises on one’s ability to make choices that are not influenced by others, giving the person a sense of freedom in the decisions that they make. This element is closely linked to environmental mastery, where it relates to one’s ability to choose, change, and control complex environments to make the environment suitable for them. Personal growth is the need for self-actualisation and realising one’s potential to continuously "grow and expand as a person" (p. 1071). Having positive relations such as having "warm, trusting interpersonal relations" (p. 1071) is important as it allows identification with others. Purpose in life encompasses having goals, intentions, and a sense of direction to function positively in life. Lastly, having a sense of self-acceptance and a positive self-image is a central feature of psychological well-being.

Within the workplace context, it is comprehensible how achieving the desired change as a result of employee voice could lead to better psychological well-being. Employees having the autonomy to decide the issues that require changes can give a sense of freedom and control to create an environment that fits employees’ needs. Implementation of the changes can be viewed as personal growth by the employee as this can indicate competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in their area of expertise in being able to contribute to the organisation. The success in

influencing change may also stem from and result in positive relations with colleagues and superiors, contributing to a sense of purpose in their work-life by achieving their intent to bring about changes within the organisation. Furthermore, in raising concerns, high self-acceptance may be evident as employees see themselves as fulfilling their responsibility as a good citizen of the organisation through highlighting issues that could lead to negative consequences for the organisation if these issues go unaddressed.

These elements can also be presented to describe how employee silence could lead to poor psychological well-being. In Knoll and van Dick's (2013) study, they used the subscale Purpose in Life to measure the relationship between the different forms of employee silence with employee psychological well-being. The results showed that all four forms of employee silence (acquiescent, quiescent, prosocial, and opportunistic) are negatively related to purpose in life. However, this finding only provides a partial understanding as it does not examine the relationship between employee voice and psychological well-being. It also considered only one out of six elements of psychological well-being to investigate its association with employee silence. In the literature, there has been a development of the concept of psychological well-being to include additional elements that form the concept known as flourishing (Diener et al., 2010). This development of the concept of psychological well-being also suggests the need to include all elements in a study for a holistic representation of the concept. Flourishing considers both the psychological and social aspects of well-being as advanced by Diener et al. (2010). It combines theories of psychological capital (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), social capital (Helliwell et al., 2009; Putnam, 2000), and purpose and meaning (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Seligman, 2002) that are argued to be beneficial to human functioning. The social aspect of well-being includes a different perspective of viewing relationship with others. It is not just defined as having the support of others but there is also the human need to support others. Therefore, the concept of flourishing is more comprehensive in that it considers the impact of different aspects of the relationship with self and others on an individual level.

On an organisational level, researchers have discussed the consequences widely, and there have been opposing views. Feuille and Delaney (1992) observed that employees who exercise voice experienced adverse negative effects and had higher turnover rates than employees who remained silent. However, other scholars suggest otherwise (see Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pennebaker, 1997; Perlow & Williams, 2003). Due to the repression of feelings and concerns that employees have, these researchers have suggested that silence can lead to higher stress and disengagement. The results from a study by McClean, Burris, and Detert (2013) showed that when employees are involved in higher-level decision making and in

situations where the management team was change-oriented, there is a negative relationship between voice and turnover intention. However, this study focused on employee voice and did not investigate the direct impact of silence on turnover intention.

Due to the complexity of the employee silence and voice constructs and its possible outcomes at an individual and organisational level, my research will investigate the direct effect of psychological well-being on turnover intention. Investigating turnover intention is crucial to support previous discussions on the relationship between employee psychological well-being and organisations and why it is crucial to implement interventions to improve employee psychological well-being. The investigation can help illustrate the direct effects of the two predictor variables (employee silence and voice) on psychological well-being and turnover intention.

### 2.4 Employee Silence and Voice Within a Cultural Context

With the large and growing body of research in the area of employee silence and voice, it is of note that very few studies have taken into account cultural differences in the employee silence and voice literature. Many studies on employee silence and voice have focused on Western cultures (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009), though in recent years, there have been more studies conducted in Asia (see Guo, Zhu, & Zhang, 2020; Xu, Qin, Dust, & DiRenzo, 2019). Due to the changing nature of culture, researchers have emphasised the importance of including this aspect within social psychological studies (Smith, Fischer, Vignoles, & Bond, 2013) as people are shaped by the culture that they live in. As culture is formed by the values, beliefs, and behaviours of a particular group of people or society, these can present as the dominant values of that culture over time. Therefore, people from different regions, countries, or communities may approach silence and voice differently. However, researchers have cautioned on generalising cultures by associating a country with one cultural dimension (Coolican, 2019). Some countries are multicultural in which individuals from different cultures behave differently from one another depending on their cultural values and beliefs. This section will discuss employee silence and voice by considering variations in cultural values and beliefs of contrasting cultures.

#### Culture

“Culture consists of systems of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral meanings shared by members of a social group (society) and learned from previous generations.” (Thomas, 2003, p. 454). This conceptualisation suggests that an individual is born into a culture. They adopt preferences and orientate towards a particular set of cultural systems ingrained into that environment over time. People learn these systems to behave in ways that are considered

acceptable within society. Socialisation explains this process of learning. In a broad sense, socialisation refers to “the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less effective members of their society” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. 4). Although there is universalism in some learnt behaviours within a culture, these may evolve depending on the context and new learning gained throughout life (Mesoudi, Chang, Dall, & Thornton, 2016). Within a country, cultural variations depend on the level of heterogeneity of society. In multicultural countries, people from different cultural backgrounds may have different sets of systems that govern their behaviours, with a culture that has a dominant type being less heterogeneous (Au, 1999). In organisations, there is a system that governs the behaviour of employees, which forms part of the workplace culture. Organisations often declare their culture through various materials and platforms (i.e., books and recruitment) that state the values that govern their behaviour (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). These values are known as espoused values, defined as “the articulated, publicly announced principles and values that the group claims to be trying to achieve” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). These espoused values may be very different to the enacted values, which are values that employees perceive the organisation actually practices (Gopinath, Nair, & Thangaraj, 2018).

Values and beliefs are shared assumptions about how one should think and behave (Rokeach, 1973; Shealy, 2015). When referring to silence and voice behaviours, people may develop beliefs about upward communication through early socialisations beginning from childhood and reinforce through to adulthood (Triandis, 1995). Milgram (1974) has noted that children develop beliefs about speaking up to authority through expectations of not questioning their parents’ instructions, which may develop into following orders from authority figures in workplaces. The learnt value here relates to power status in that authority figures have a higher power status. Further to that, our understanding of cultural variation would suggest that power status is perceived differently in contrasting cultures.

Power distance is a cultural value that indicates the relative acceptance of unequal distribution of power within a culture or society (Hofstede, 1980; Lee, Pillutla, & Law, 2000). Individuals high on power distance orientation accept that power is distributed unequally. These people perceive that superiors have a higher power status and thus a greater control over their subordinates. On the other hand, individuals low on power distance orientation believe that power should be distributed equally. These people perceive superiors as equals and thus do not exert control over their subordinates. The cultural value of power distance has been investigated alongside the most widely conducted cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1995). Individualism versus collectivism explores the degree to which

people in a society are integrated into groups. Individualistic societies are not tightly-integrated and emphasise the 'I' as opposed to the 'we'. Collectivism describes a society that is tightly integrated with relationships that bind extended families and similar others into in-groups.

The notion of cultural differences on an individual level has been described as vertical and horizontal orientations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The vertical dimension indicates an individual's acceptance of inequality (high power distance), and the horizontal dimension indicates an individual's belief that people share similar status and are equal (low power distance) (Triandis & Gelfland, 1998). Power distance has been reported to have strong positive correlations with the cultural value of collectivism and this result indicates that horizontal individualism and vertical collectivism are dominant cultural profiles around the world (Triandis, 1995).

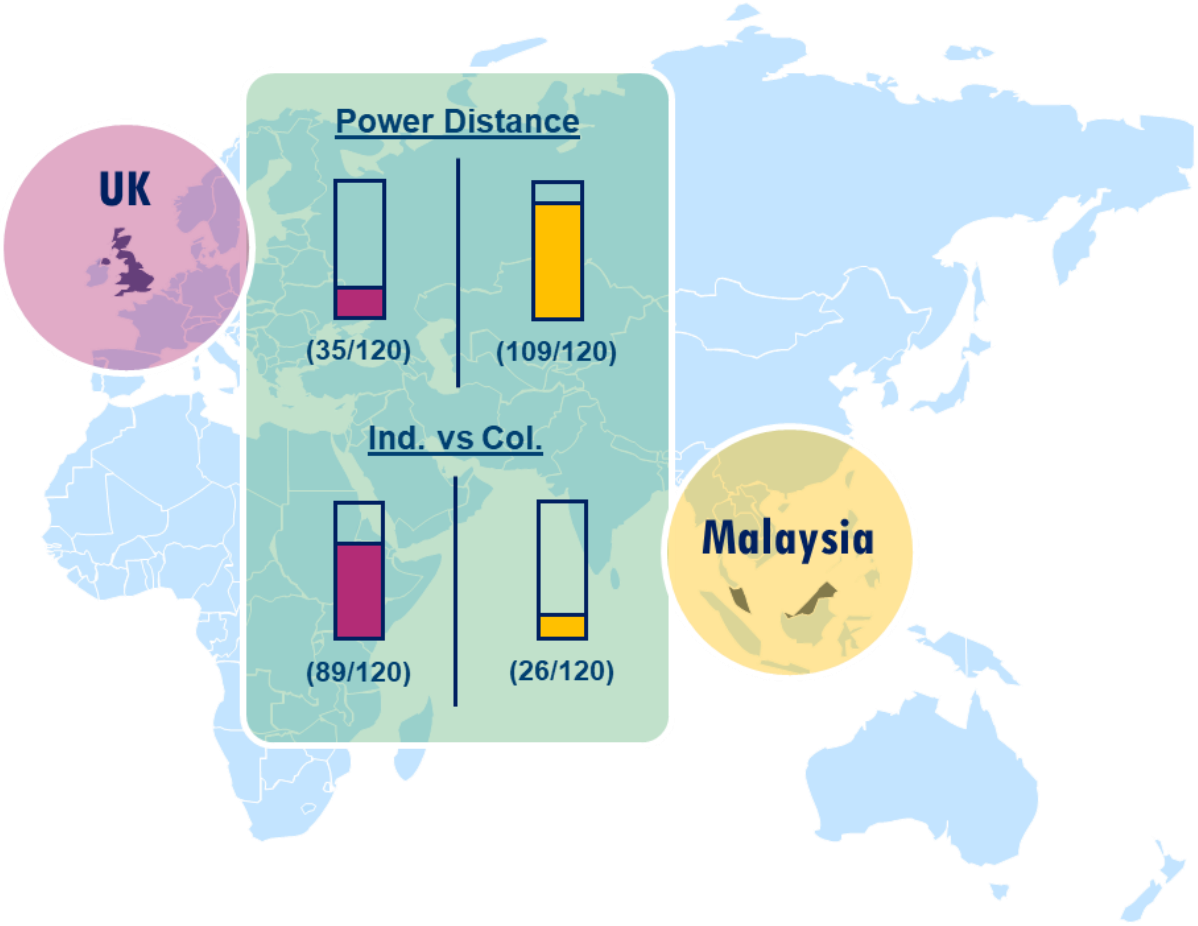
In a study by Botero and Van Dyne (2009), they examined the influence of power distance in predicting employees' voice behaviour in the United States and Colombia. Colombia is considered a culture with high power distance where the less powerful members of the organisation accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The United States, on the other hand, is considered a low power distance culture where people perceive the status of the other to be similar. As predicted in the study, employees in Colombia engaged in less voice behaviour. Even after accounting for employees' relationship with their supervisors, the employees engage in low voice behaviour even in situations where the employee-supervisor relationship is high. The findings provided insights into the influence of power distance in making employees feel that they must conform to expectations when interacting with an authority figure. Although the results shed light on the significant impact of cultural values and beliefs on voice behaviour, it also leads to the question of whether individuals always conform to these values and beliefs. Generalising these findings would suggest that remaining silent is a common practice in cultures with high power distance, and speaking up is only evident in low power distance cultures. This interpretation requires further investigation since existing studies in the literature have reported significant silence behaviours even in low power distance cultures. Furthermore, studies have shown that there are individual and cultural variations where not all members of a society would conform to certain values and beliefs (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010; Mesoudi et al., 2016).

The dominance of the cultural profiles of horizontal individualism and vertical collectivism was reflected in the findings of a study by Morrison, Chen, and Salgado (2004). The researchers investigated the displays of self-assertiveness of newcomers in the United States and Hong

Kong in approaching supervisors for performance feedback. Employees in the United States reported asking their supervisors for feedback more frequently than employees in Hong Kong. Self-assertiveness is considered characteristic of individualistic societies such as the United States. People from these cultures tend to freely express themselves and have been socialised to pursue individual goals, rights, and needs (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). As Hong Kong is a culture with high power distance (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Diekmann, 2009), this may have offset the study's assumption that newcomers in Hong Kong would be proactive in seeking feedback for improvement and perceive supervisors as more approachable. Comparably, the United States is a low power distance culture (Brockner et al., 2009) where employees may generally display more self-assertiveness. Therefore, the findings seem to support the notion that horizontalism is associated with individualism, and verticalism is associated with collectivism. It also suggests that employee voice may be a more common practice and an expectation in cultures characterised by horizontal individualism.

Referring back to the central assumption of the literature where voice is ‘good’ and silence is ‘bad’ and the debate of this thesis suggesting negative consequences of voice and the possible benefits of remaining silent for individuals, empirical studies have also not considered the benefits of silence for employees from collectivist countries since research surrounding employee silence and voice have been very much western-centric. This current research intends to explore the possible benefits of silence for employees from contrasting cultures by including the UK and Malaysia in this investigation. Malaysia has the highest power distance index at 109 out of 120 whereas UK is in the top ten countries with the lowest power distance index out of 66 countries at 35 out of 120 (Hofstede, 1984). As for the individualism versus collectivism index, the UK has a high index at 89 out of 120 making it an individualist country and Malaysia has a low index at 26 out of 120 making it a collectivist country (Hofstede, 1984). Figure 2.3 presents a visual comparison of the indices for the two countries. As Malaysia has a much higher power distance index compared to the UK, this may suggest that Malaysians orientate towards vertical collectivism and the dominant cultural profile in the UK is horizontal individualism.

**Figure 2.3 Cultural Dimension Index for the UK and Malaysia**




*Note:* Ind. – Individualism, Col. – Collectivism.

Country Background

A brief background of the two countries investigated in this research will be presented in this section. The information presented aims to provide a better understanding of the cultural context of this research.

***United Kingdom***

United Kingdom (UK), with the offical name United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is an island country located off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe (see Figure 2.4). The name Britain is used to represent the whole of the United Kingdom that includes England, Scotland, and Wales categorised under Great Britain. London is the capital as well as the largest city, known to be one of the world's leading commercial, financial, and cultural hubs (Whitelock, 2020).

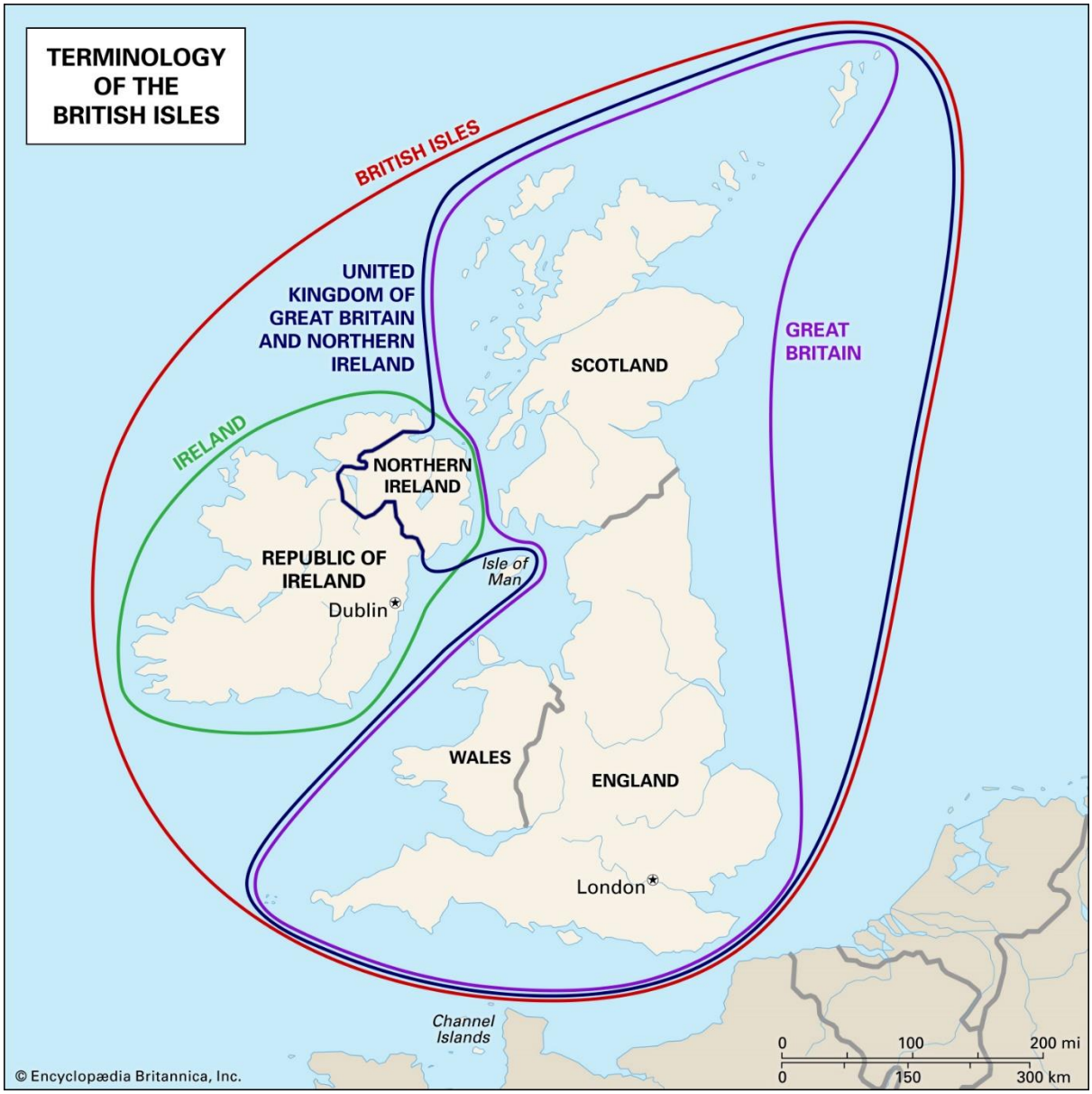
The UK has a population of 63,182,178 with approximately 50.9% females and 49.1% males (ONS, 2011). In England and Wales (56,075,912 or 88.8% of the UK population), 80.5%

identify as White British, with 93% inhabitants identify as White British in Wales, and 79% identify as White British in England. The largest category after White British is Other White (4.4%). Asian is the third largest group that includes Indians (2.5%), Pakistanis (2%), Bangladeshi (0.8%), Chinese (0.7%), and Other Asian (1.5%). This is followed by the Black community, Black Africans (1.8%), Black Caribbeans (1.1%), and Other Black (0.5%). The mixed categories amount to 1.7%, which includes Mixed White and Caribbean (0.8%), Mixed White and Asian (0.6%), and Mixed White and African (0.3%). Arabs account for 0.4%.

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy that has a Head of State and a Head of Government. The Head of State is also known as the Monarch of the United Kingdom (Queen or King) and does not have the power to directly influence political decisions. The Monarch acts on the advice of the prime minister and the cabinet who hold all political power. The monarch and their immediate family undertake constitutional and representational duties. As the monarchy is constitutional, the monarch acts as a symbol of unity and pride of the nation with functions limited to official, ceremonial, and diplomatic duties such as bestowing honours and appointing the prime minister. These are said to be carried out in a non-partisan manner.

The Head of Government, the prime minister, is the leader of the majority political party in the House of Commons and leads the government. The prime minister oversees the operation of the civil service and government agencies, and appoints ministers. The government is responsible for running and managing the country on a daily basis for five years after being elected, which is the usual duration for an election to be held to elect a government. The government makes decisions on tax rates and how public money is being spent, and ensuring the efficient delivery of public services such as the National Health Service, the police and armed forces, welfare benefits, and the country’s energy supply (GOV.uk, n.d.).

**Figure 2.4 British Isles Terminology**




*Source:* Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.)

The UK Parliament consists of people who have been elected and people who have been appointed by the prime minister. There are two Houses in the Parliament:

- The House of Commons, where all the people elected at the General Election work, as MPs, for the next five years. This includes people in other political parties, as well as those in the winning party who were not chosen to be ministers.
- The House of Lords, whose members are mostly appointed for life rather than elected. They have often been chosen because of their achievements and experience. Many do not belong to a political party.

The job of a Parliament is to examine the government's plans and to monitor how the government is managing things to ensure that they are being held accountable for their decisions if the following criteria are not met:

- open and transparent – by questioning ministers and requesting information.
- workable and efficient – by examining new proposals closely and suggesting improvements, checking how public money is being spent, and tracking how new laws are working out in practice.
- fair and non-discriminatory – by checking that they comply with equalities and human rights laws and by speaking up on behalf of affected individuals.

The Opposition is part of the Parliament and is the largest non-government party in the House of Commons. The leader of the opposition selects a team of people known as the Shadow Cabinet who holds the government accountable by questioning the prime minister and government ministers in Parliament meetings (UK Parliament, n.d.).

In the UK, there were 51.4% of the population employed in 2018 based on data from the Office for National Statistics. Employees with White backgrounds make up the majority of the total workforce at nearly 88% and the ethnic minorities account for about 12%.

***Malaysia***

Malaysia is located just north of the equator in Southeast Asia and is composed of two noncontiguous regions known as 1) Semenanjung Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia), also referred to as Malaysia Barat (West Malaysia), and 2) Malaysia Timur (East Malaysia), which is on the Borneo island. Kuala Lumpur, colloquially referred to as KL, is the capital of the country that is located on the western part of the peninsula. Putrajaya is the administrative centre and is located on the south of the capital (see Figure 2.5).

Malaysia is a member of the Commonwealth, a community of 54 countries formerly under British rule. The Federation of Malaya gained independence from the British on 31 August 1957. Malaysia was established on 16 September 1963 and comprised of the territories of Malaya (now Peninsular Malaysia), the island of Singapore, and the colonies of Sarawak and Sabah in northern Borneo. On 9 August 1965, Singapore seceded from the Malayan territories and became an independent republic known officially as the Republic of Singapore.

**Figure 2.5 Malaysia on the Map**




*Source:* Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.)

Malaysia has a population of 32,523,000 with approximately 51.7% males and 48.3% females (DOSM, 2019). The Malay Malaysians are the largest ethnic group accounting for 50.1%, followed by Chinese Malaysians (22.6%) and Indian Malaysians (6.7%). Orang Asli, also known as the natives of the land or the Original People, account for 0.7% of the population. Indigenous Groups in Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) account for 11.1%, and the remaining ethnic groups make up 8.8% of the rest of the population (World Atlas, 2019). The Malay Malaysians and Indigenous Groups are collectively called *Bumiputera* (Princes of the Earth), while the Chinese Malaysians and Indian Malaysians are known as immigrant populations, called *non-Bumiputera* as defined by the Malaysian government (Lockard, Ahmad, Ooi, & Leinbach, 2021). Although the Malay Malaysians have argued that they are 'indigenous' to the country (Ishak, 2019), this ethnic group originated from regions in pre-

independence Indonesia and is not considered indigenous to the country based on the definition by the United Nations (Cobo, 1986). Furthermore, this has been put forward as having legal implications on the Orang Asli community and their “quest for indigeneity and the recognition of their rights as distinct Indigenous Peoples” (Subramaniam, 2015, p. 71; see also Aiken & Leigh, 2011), hence reported as separate ethnic groups.

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy with a government system that models the Westminster parliamentary system, a legacy of British rule. The Head of State is the monarch, whose official title is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and is always a King, unlike the UK that is based on heredity regardless of gender. The King is elected to a five-year term from among the nine hereditary rulers of the Malay states on a rotational basis. The King’s role is similar to the British monarch. It has been largely ceremonial such as electing ministers and members of the upper house. The Malay community views loyalty to the King as a tradition and custom (Dzulkifli & Mohd Zameri, 2010).

The government holds executive power and is led by the prime minister. In Malaysia, the Parliament consists of the lower house, Dewan Rakyat, known as the House of Representatives, similar to the House of Commons in the UK. The upper house, Dewan Negara is known as the Senate, similar to the House of Lords in the UK.

In 2018, 68.4% of the population was employed based on data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia. The unemployment rate was at 3.3%.

Psychological Contract

The topic of culture was further reviewed in relation to the psychological contract. The psychological contract is discussed from the perspective of cultural variation of the impact of silence and voice on employee psychological well-being.

The psychological contract is commonly defined as “individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between the individual and their organization” (Rousseau, 1995, p. 9). Here, beliefs are the employee's perception of the organisation's commitment to meeting the implicit and explicit promises made to the employee (Conway & Briner, 2009). In another definition that takes into consideration the reciprocity of the agreement, the psychological contract is “the perception of both parties to the employment relationship – organisation and individual – of the reciprocal promises and implications implied in the relationship” (Guest & Conway, 2002, p. 22).

In this current research, examining the psychological contract theory from the employee silence and voice perspective addresses the conceptualisation issue in empirical studies as to what constitutes a 'contract' disputed by many researchers (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Guest, 1998). As communication (or the lack of) is at the core of the psychological contract theory in a dyadic relationship in the workplace, this theory presents an important consideration when examining the two psychological conditions of safety and well-being.

The definition of employee voice states the expectations and obligations of an employee and employer concerning their roles and responsibilities within this specific context, which provides a clear basis of what constitutes within the psychological contract when investigating this theory. As employees are 'expected' by employers to raise workplace issues of concern, and employers are 'expected' by employees to act on those concerns, it implies that a psychological contract exists. The contract falls under the realm of being 'psychological' since a formal written agreement was not issued. Employees are only expected to raise workplace issues of concerns at all times, while employers are expected to address all concerns that employees raise. It is also not agreed upon and clearly stated as to what the consequences are for either party when there is a breach of the psychological contract.

In examining who the employer is within the context of employee silence and voice, the employer or organisation commonly presented in the definition of psychological contract may also refer to the line manager. The involvement of the line manager in human resource management has been placed centre-stage as part of the human resources approach (Renwick, 2003). Therefore, the line manager is often heavily involved in making decisions concerning their subordinates. It includes the hiring of employees to training the employees and also in progressing their careers (Renwick, 2003). Under such circumstances, the line manager may be a significant point of reference and play a crucial role in representing the organisation in keeping the implicit or explicit promises made to the employee throughout their career in the organisation. Most employees report to a line manager and these line managers are often their first point of contact should there be any concerns to raise. Hence, employee perception of their line manager needs to be considered when examining employee silence and voice in relation to the psychological contract. Research has shown the interdependence of perceived organisational support and psychological contract (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003) with other studies reporting a high correlation between perceived supervisor support and perceived organisational support (Rhoades et al., 2001). Perceived supervisor support has also been reported as an antecedent to perceived organisational support in a meta-analysis by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002). These results suggest the need to investigate perceived supervisor support since the 'employer' in the 'employee-employer relationship' often

proposed within the definition of psychological contract could also indicate the line manager or supervisor within the context of employee silence and voice. It serves as an opportunity to investigate the influence of the line manager on employee's silence and voice behaviour and the impact that it can have on employees' psychological well-being.

In a seminal work by Turnley and Feldman (1999), they examined the relationship between violations of the psychological contract and the employee's behaviour in response to the violations. The research is grounded in Hirschman's (1970) Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect (EVLN) model used as a framework to understand employee's responses. Turnley and Feldman's study has helped examine the impact of psychological contract violations on employee's EVLN responses. Considering the supervisor's role in upholding the psychological contract, it presents an opportunity to further investigate the theory by including perceived supervisor support and perceived organisational support into the model. Since low supervisor and organisational support could be considered as a psychological contract violation (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003), it is important to consider these variables in enhancing our understanding of its association with employee silence and voice, and its impact on employees's psychological well-being and turnover intention (Guest, 2004).

From a conceptual standpoint, there are many sources of psychological contract formation and violation (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006), which may contribute to the challenge in identifying when and how the contract is formed or violated. As power imbalance is inherent in all employee-employer relationships, the psychological contract can easily be violated. Employees may perceive a breach of the psychological contract in situations where the line manager or employer do not act on the concerns raised to make changes and improve the situation. Furthermore, the psychological contract is fluid and constantly changes throughout the employment depending on the interactions between the employee and their supervisor and the organisation. As the psychological contract is also subjective, it can exist without an agreement between the employee and the supervisor and the organisation (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Employees may have expectations of how supervisors and organisations should behave in response to speaking up about workplace issues of concern that may be socially acquired (Detert and Edmondson, 2011). The implicit theories may form part of an employee's knowledge structure that guides their silence and voice behaviours. Organisations may also have created high levels of expectation in employees through their employer branding efforts. Websites often explicitly state core values such as openness, honesty, integrity, and respect as guiding principles in how organisations operate daily. These core values suggest that the organisation values employee voice. Since employees revise the psychological contract on an ongoing basis, they assess situations and change their

knowledge structure and responses when a breach occurs that leads to a reevaluation of their behaviour (Niedl, 1996; Rousseau, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999).

There have been many initiatives in workplaces that encourage the voice culture to foster a more open and honest reporting culture. Yet studies have continued to report incidences of employee silence about serious issues of concern due to the absence of psychological safety (Carter et al., 2013; Salin et al., 2014). In considering the impact on organisations, since employee silence is ambiguous, employers cannot easily detect contract violations when employees remain silent about concerns. Organisations may suffer from affected performance due to poor employee psychological well-being that leads to low levels of employee productivity (Morrison, 2014). Depending on the norm of the culture and employees' value and belief systems, these could lead to different well-being outcomes for the employees due to varying degrees of tolerance and acceptance of hierarchical systems at work.

From a cultural variation perspective, there are differences in perceptions of a violation where "unmet terms are perceived as a contract violation only when they indicate an imbalance in the exchange relationship that is sufficiently unfavorable to exceed a perceptual threshold." (Thomas et al., 2003, p. 460). Thomas et al. (2003) made a proposition that collectivists experience more severe impact on their well-being when experiencing a breach than individualists (Thomas et al., 2003). The rationale behind this proposal is grounded in collectivists having a higher level of tolerance for unmet terms as they tend to attribute violations to external factors unrelated to the supervisor or the organisation. On the other hand, individualists are suggested as having lower thresholds for perceiving violations as they are more equity sensitive (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Due to the trust that collectivists have in organisations to respond fairly, when the situation reaches a stage where collectivists attribute breach to the supervisor or organisation (exceeds threshold), it can lead to more severe psychological reactions such as stress and internal conflict. Individualists have also been suggested as being more likely to respond with voice in situations where there is a psychological violation since individualists demand autonomy. They are less likely to suffer in silence since they prefer expressing themselves to adjust the psychological contract while collectivists are more likely to remain silent and in some cases may respond by exiting the organisation to maintain harmony. However, these generalisations require further investigation to examine the propositions for confirmation.

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the multidimensionality of silence and voice in the workplace and the causal effect of these constructs. I presented the various factors that influence employee silence and voice from the literature by considering different aspects of culture and highlighting the impact of silence and voice behaviours on employees' well-being. In reviewing the literature, I put forward the three psychological theories (psychological safety, psychological well-being, and the psychological contract) as the underlying foundations for understanding individual choice in remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern. This literature review allowed the development of the research aims and objectives used to formulate the research questions and hypotheses. The following are areas identified in this literature review that requires investigation to advance the existing literature on employee silence and voice:

- Factors internal and external to the organisation that influence individual choice to remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern.
- The different forms of silence and voice when taking into account workplace issues of concern and culture.
- The ways in which silence and voice affects employee well-being in contrasting cultures.
- The language used in society surrounding silence and voice, as well as behavioural expectations associated to the constructs.

Chapter 3 will describe the research design used to achieve the aims and objectives of this thesis to answer the research questions posed.

# Chapter 3

## Method

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the scope of the research that consists of the overall aims, research objectives, and research questions. The methodological rationale is described, taking into consideration the philosophical foundation and epistemological assumptions of mixed methods research. This is followed by presenting the overall research design consisting of semi-structured interviews (Study 1), an online questionnaire (Study 2), and a discourse analysis (Study 3). All three studies were carried out in accordance to the University of Nottingham's Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (2016) and the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018). The detailed account of the procedures to recruit participants, develop the instrument, collect the data, analyse the information collected, and in ensuring the validity of the techniques used will be presented in Chapter 4 (Study 1), Chapter 5 (Study 2), and Chapter 6 (Study 3).

### 3.2 Research Scope

In this section, I lay out the specific research questions that are informed by the research objectives developed to achieve the research aims.

Aims

The primary aim of this thesis is to understand the impact of employee silence and voice on individuals' well-being in the UK and Malaysia, and the implications on organisations. The secondary aim is to provide insights to leaders of organisations as well as practitioners involved in employee engagement on ways to foster a healthy work environment where people who decide to speak up not only feel safe to express themselves, but are empowered to put their thoughts into action to create value as this can maximise workforce productivity and bring about positive change and innovation to the organisation and society.

Research Objectives

To build on existing research based on the review of literature in Chapter 2, two research objectives were developed that take into consideration the complexities of employee silence and voice to provide insights from a well-being perspective within the cultural context of the UK and Malaysia:

***Research Objective 1***

*To explore and examine the ways in which remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern can have an impact on employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia.*

Although researchers are focusing more on employee silence in recent years, there is a paucity of research that investigates both employee silence and voice in an empirical study. As communication serves as the foundation of psychologically healthy workplace practices, it is crucial to understand why employees choose to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern and establish the relationship between silence and voice *and* employee well-being. On the basis that the UK and Malaysia are situated in different parts of the world, one in the West and the other in the East, this investigation can review the existing debate on the interpersonal communication differences between people in two contrasting cultures and the impact on the employees in these countries.

***Research Objective 2***

*To explore the relationship between social expectation and an individual's choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern.*

As the UK and Malaysia are on different ends of the cultural dimension index, this allows for a between-country comparison of employees' experiences of silence and voice. The expression of cultural norms and shared assumptions of reality are often communicated through the media. An exploration of media language can help contextualise the different social expectations that might influence individual behaviour in relation to silence and voice in contrasting cultures. This investigation can enhance our understanding of how employees in the UK and Malaysia behave and navigate through the processes in the workplace when dealing with the concerns they have.

<u>Research Questions</u>

To address the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated and will be answered using a mixed methods approach that combines a qualitative inquiry, a quantitative investigation, and a further qualitative data interpretation:

1. What factors influence employees in making individual choices to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern?
2. How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia?

3. What are the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia?
4. What is the relationship between social expectation and individual choice in relation to silence and voice in the workplace?

### 3.3 Methodological Rationale

The rationale for the selection of the methodology used is driven by the research topic and research questions. In acknowledging my role as the researcher and the influence that I have on the research process to acquire the knowledge that I present in my thesis, I will discuss my values, beliefs, and stance that inform the methodological approach as well as the methods of data collection outlined in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Philosophical Foundations of the Research

The nature of how people make sense of the world and describe their experiences have been in the form of words, numbers, and images. These different ways of experiencing the world and expressing them are evident in our daily lives. As individuals are unique due to their societal background that influences the experiences that they encounter, every person sees, hears, and processes information differently. From a research perspective, the "multiple ways of seeing and hearing" (Greene, 2007, p. 20) provides a holistic view in the acquisition of knowledge. As experiences are viewed as being subjective at an individual level, collective experiences at a group level is viewed as necessary for objectivity. Scholars have debated the use of qualitative methods of interpreting experiences to the use of quantitative methods of verifying experiences.

The dichotomous view of knowledge acquisition has always existed in the way that it is being categorised. Traditionally, there are two branches in how humans have attempted to understand and describe the world around us, which are the sciences and the arts. The way research is conducted in these two branches are based on different underpinning philosophical assumptions. The science and the arts community each have their own sets of generalisations, beliefs, and values that are known as worldviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The sciences adopt a positivist worldview that lean towards logical empiricism, which is based on logic, maths, and statistics, often associated with quantitative approaches that rely on using numbers to make sense of the world. On the other hand, the origins of the arts is rooted in constructivism, adopting a constructivist worldview that is often associated with qualitative approaches that rely on learning through social interaction and using words or language to make sense of the world. Psychology is an area of study that spans across the spectrum of these two opposing worldviews.

Although psychology is widely acknowledged as a branch of science and is considered the scientific study of human behaviour in identifying the processes that underlie our actions, the element of sociology, which is considered an arts branch, is an integral part in studying how individuals think about the society and social processes and how these influence the individual's behaviour (Tarde, 1898). This is especially crucial in organisational and workplace research as individuals do not exist in isolation and are required to socialise and interact with other individuals as well as organisational and societal processes and policies that have an influence on the individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. Therefore, the two worldviews are important in making contributions in the field of occupational psychology. Furthermore, a combination of data in the form of words in a qualitative sense to give depth, and numbers in a quantitative sense to give breadth has been suggested to provide "the most complete analysis of complex problems" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 23).

The formation of the mixed methods approach began in the 1950s (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) and continued to evolve with increasing acceptance of the approach as a methodology in its own right, earning the recognition of being the "third research paradigm" (Johnson & Onwuegnuzie, 2004, p. 15) following the developments of first the quantitative approach and then the qualitative methodology. Fifty years on, Howe (2004) and Giddings (2006) reflected on the use of mixed methods approaches raising concerns on the marginalised position of qualitative research within the methodology and the ethics behind incorporating the qualitative element. This is a clear indication that the qualitative methodology is still struggling to gain acceptance due to its interpretative nature of data sense-making and may be included only as a way to perpetuate the hegemony of positivism through the guise of a mixed methods study.

From a theoretical perspective, the concepts of silence and voice in themselves provide practical suggestions on the appropriate methodologies to use to document people's experiences for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Employees who remain silent about workplace issues of concern may be more comfortable in completing anonymous questionnaires whereas employees who have been actively speaking up about workplace issues of concern may be more inclined to engage in conversations to share their experiences in more depth and for their voices to be heard. Further to that, as my research involves country comparison, generalisation of experiences in large samples require the use of statistical analyses to process the sizable amount of data to obtain meaningful findings.

Although quantitative techniques are fundamentally objective and positivistic in nature, quantitative methods of data analysis cannot be fully considered as neutral techniques especially in this research because of my direct involvement as a researcher in its design and

in linking the various studies, which combines the different epistemological and theoretical assumptions developed by prior researchers and infusing them into one research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Therefore, the overarching philosophy or worldview of this research is pragmatism as it embraces a mixed methods approach by conducting studies that are sequentially linked (Creswell, 2013). From an ontological perspective, depending on the needs of the research, reality is viewed as both multiple (a point where it is important to assess varied individual input to understand the phenomenon) and singular (a point where a theory operates to explain the phenomenon).

It is also within reason to integrate the two worldviews as my research is informed and guided by the literature review that includes findings from studies that employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which is an acknowledgement that both approaches are valid and important in the process of acquiring knowledge. Based on the review of literature, there are indications of the limited studies conducted in this research area and thus starting with exploring people's experiences followed by an interpretation of those experiences is required to form a preliminary framework that can serve to inform the subsequent studies.

In constructing the preliminary framework, I am actively partaking in social constructivism through my learning of the area of study by interacting with my interview participants and interpreting their experiences. The process of interpretation involves my participation in the study as a researcher and the primary subject in making sense of the world through participants' subjective accounts. It is therefore inevitable that my beliefs, values, interests, and social identity may have played a role in influencing the research process. Further to that, although I operate from a pragmatist worldview, my research emphasises on constructivism over a post-positivist perspective due to the sequence of my studies that begins with exploring experiences through a qualitative study.

In acknowledging the interconnectedness between the researcher, the method, and the data (Mauthner & Daucet, 2003), I commit to observing reflexivity and documented my thought processes that not only informed the way I transformed individual subjective accounts into theories that were tested in the subsequent study, but also throughout the research process in the way I developed the measurement instrument for my quantitative study as well as my interpretation of the public discourse on social values that influenced the silence and voice behaviour of employees in the UK and Malaysia. In addition to building reflexivity into the way data analysis was conducted, I consciously created dedicated times, spaces, and contexts to be reflexive throughout the research process.

Core Characteristics of the Research Methodology

In reflecting on the methodology to use for my research and to provide a clear rationale for the selection of a mixed methods approach, I took into consideration the intent of my study and rely on the core characteristics of mixed methods research defined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017, p. 5):

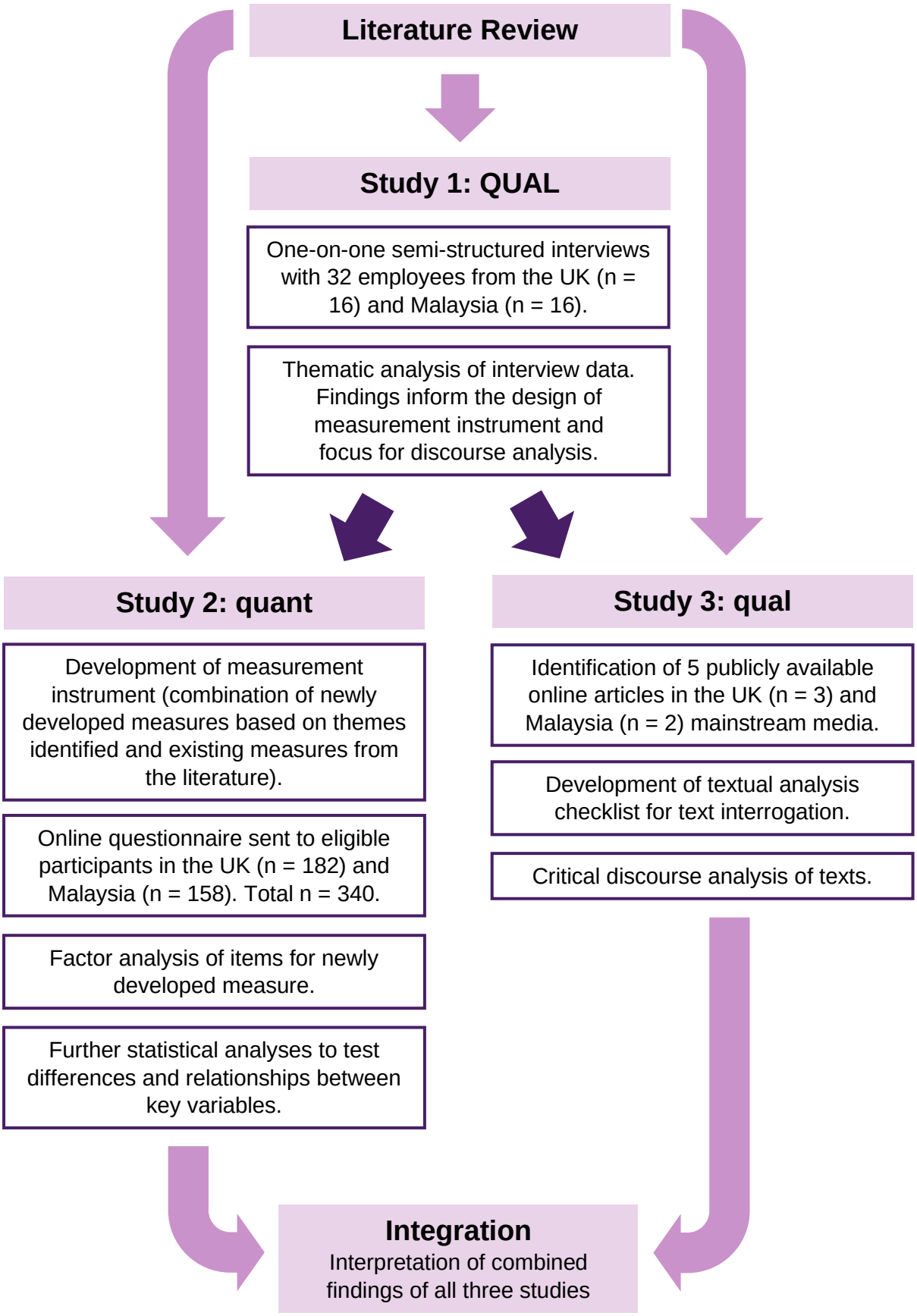
- collects and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data rigorously in response to research questions and hypotheses,
- integrates the two forms of data and their results,
- organises these procedures into specific research designs that provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study, and
- frames these procedures within theory and philosophy.

### 3.4 Research Design

A sequential mixed methods design was employed to answer the research questions informed by the research objectives to meet the aims of the thesis. This is based on the underpinning philosophy of a pragmatist worldview that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer the specific research questions of this research, starting with a qualitative approach to explore the topic area first. Specifically, the exploratory sequential design is used with an emphasis on the first qualitative study that drives the overall research design.

To achieve Research Objective 1, semi-structured interviews were conducted. A further investigation was carried out through an online questionnaire to generalise the findings to the UK and Malaysia population. To meet Research Objective 2, first, a discourse analysis was conducted to analyse publicly available online articles in the mainstream media. This is followed by integrating and interpreting the findings of all three studies to fully meet Research Objective 2. The studies are sequentially linked in that the findings from Study 1 informed the development of Study 2 and 3. An overview of the research methodology is presented in Figure 3.1 and the details of each study will be described in the subsequent chapters.

**Figure 3.1 Research Methodology: Sequential Mixed Methods Design**



### 3.5 Chapter Summary

As set out earlier, I presented the scope of the research that consists of the overall aims, research objectives, research questions, the methodological rationale, and the overall research design. The studies are sequentially linked in that the findings from Study 1 informed the development of Study 2 and Study 3. The first study answers Research Questions 1 and 2, with Study 2 addressing Research Question 2 further, while Study 3 answers Research Question 3. The findings of all three studies will then be integrated to address Research Question 4.

Overall, the research is expected to achieve its aim of enhancing our understanding of employee silence and voice in workplaces in the UK and Malaysia in relation to individual psychological well-being. In the subsequent chapters, I will provide a detailed description of the research design and procedures in relation to participant recruitment, data collection, and data analyses for the three studies of this mixed methods research. I will also present the sampling methods, recruitment strategies, the questions included on the interview schedule, and the measures used in the online questionnaire. This research has been designed to take into consideration its reliability and validity to mitigate any potential risks and shortcomings identified beforehand. In addition to that, a reflexive approach to conducting the studies was also built into the research to ensure on-going learning and identification of strengths and limitations of the research. The detailed methods and findings of each study will be presented next in three separate chapters: Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

# Chapter 4

## Study 1: Semi-structured Interviews

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the detailed methods and findings for Study 1. I performed a thematic analysis on 32 interviews conducted with participants from the UK and Malaysia. I recruited 16 participants from each country based on a set of inclusion criteria. This study aims to answer the first and second research questions. The data reveal the factors influencing employees' decisions on whether to engage in silence or voice behaviour and how the silence and voice behaviours lead to different well-being outcomes. I used Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-stage process to analyse the interview transcripts and identified the following main themes for each research question:

***Research Question 1***

*What factors influence employees in making individual choices to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern?*

The factors that influence employees' silence and voice decisions are:

- Socialisation
- Type of issue
- Support for voice

***Research Question 2***

*How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being?*

a) The specific aspects of silence and voice that lead to different well-being outcomes are:
   - Reason for behaviour
   - Outcome of behaviour

b) The well-being related outcomes as a result of silence and voice are:
   - Sense of self
   - Sense of belonging

### 4.2 Method

In gathering information to perform thematic analysis on the interview data for the purpose of addressing Research Questions 1 and 2 to achieve the first research objective, the sampling procedure, participant recruitment, data collection, and analytic procedures are detailed out in this section. An interview with a semi-structured format was selected as it allows participants the flexibility to discuss the experiences that they feel comfortable sharing with the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) while giving the researcher space to cover the topic areas in the interview guide without a fixed sequence to reflect an informal conversation that has a more relaxing tone.

Sampling Procedure and Participant Recruitment

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants who meet the criteria determined for this study based on the research scope and the literature review conducted. The following were the three inclusion criteria:

- employees who have been in situations where they have remained silent and/or have spoken up about workplace issues of concern,
- were reporting to a line manager, and
- were either a British citizen working in the UK or a Malaysian citizen working in Malaysia under paid employment by the organisation during the time when they experienced remaining silent and/or speaking up about the issues of concern in their current or previous workplace.

Participants were invited to participate in the research through an informal process starting from personal contacts using snowball sampling strategy to recruit subsequent participants. The snowball sampling began with initial participants handing out an invitation letter provided by the researcher to potential participants, inviting them to contact the researcher via email if they were interested to participate in the study. Due to the possible disclosure of confidential information by participants about their workplace issues of concern, this method allows greater access to potential respondents who match the inclusion criteria who may be more likely to participate in the research and freely share their experiences as they are familiar or acquainted to the initial participants. Potential participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet that has further details about the research and the interview (see Appendix 1).

This method of snowball sampling was adopted with reference to the method used by Biernacki & Waldorf (1981) for samples that are difficult to access as this study involves recruiting employees who may have been silent about issues of concern in their organisations.

There were instances to suggest that this method is particularly useful in recruiting participants who the researcher has difficulties accessing for reasons including but not limited to their location, social circle, and professional network. I was fortunate to have discovered a personal contact who knew people who were part of a network of employees who have experienced remaining silent and/or speaking up about workplace issues of concern who were also part of other similar networks. This facilitated further recruitment of eight participants in the UK that helped end the data collection phase. Having had work experience and being well connected to employed people in Malaysia as I was born and bred in the country, there were no issues in recruiting Malaysian participants who met the inclusion criteria.

32 participants (16 from the UK and 16 from Malaysia) took part in the interview. Out of these, 31 were under full-time employment and 1 UK participant was a part-time employee. It is worth noting that all eight participants that were not employed at the time of the interview are from the UK. The sample sizes recommended for a large-scale thematic analysis study are between 15-20 interview participants (Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015) to allow for meaningful themes to be identified. The recruitment ended after 16 participants have been interviewed per country as the study kept in mind the principles of data saturation in qualitative research (Ando, Cousins, & Young, 2014).

During the recruitment process, the researcher performed a preliminary analysis after interviewing 10 participants (5 from the UK and 5 from Malaysia) and continuously evaluated the adequacy of the final sample size guided by the information power model (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Interviews were terminated at the point where the sample holds adequate information power to develop new knowledge. The five items that were identified by Malterud et. al. (2016, p. 1754) that have an impact on the information power of the sample were: (a) study aim, (b) sample specificity, (c) use of established theory, (d) quality of dialogue, and (e) analysis strategy. As many individuals shared past experiences where necessary to articulate current experiences and were not limited to one incident, this provided different scenarios of when participants remained silent and/or spoke up about workplace issues of concern. Therefore, the information gathered was deemed rich and may have met the requirements of what was identified as adequate power for data analysis.

Participants' demographics are presented in Table 4.1. To maintain anonymity, participants are referred to by a participant number (P#), followed by their country of origin (UK for United Kingdom or MY for Malaysia). For example, P03UK or P16MY. Any demographic information that may identify the participants or their work and social networks was omitted or presented in a generalised category.

**Table 4.1 Participants' Demographics**

| Participant number / Country | Industry | Title/Role |
|---|---|---|
| P01MY | Education | Public Relations Executive |
| P02UK | Education | Early Years Teacher* |
| P03UK | Retail | Human Resources Manager |
| P04MY | Education | Senior Manager |
| P05MY | Professional Services | Client Success Manager |
| P06MY | Pharmaceutical | Medical Customer Interface Manager |
| P07UK | Education | Marketing and Communications Manager |
| P08MY | Professional Services | Product Development Executive |
| P09UK | Professional Services | Internal Auditor |
| P10UK | Veterinary Services | Veterinarian |
| P11UK | Professional Services | Executive Assistant |
| P12MY | Professional Services | Research Manager |
| P13MY | Technology | Copywriter |
| P14MY | Education | Counsellor |
| P15MY | Real Estate | Consultant |
| P16MY | Technology | Sales Engineer |
| P17MY | Education | Early Child Educator |
| P18MY | Education | Assistant Professor |
| P19MY | Manufacturing | Supply Chain Senior Manager |
| P20MY | Technology | Sales and Marketing Manager |
| P21UK | Technology | Business Development Manager* |
| P22UK | Childcare | Nursery Assistant* |
| P23MY | Professional Services | Employer Branding Executive |
| P24UK | Healthcare | Medical Director* |
| P25UK | Construction | Apprenticeship Officer* |
| P26MY | Media | Account Servicing Executive |
| P27UK | Healthcare | Healthcare professional* |
| P28UK | Healthcare | HR Director* |
| P29UK | Education | Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer |
| P30UK | Public Services | Commissioning Manager |
| P31UK | Healthcare | Consultant Paediatrician* |
| P32UK | Healthcare | Project Manager |

*Participants not employed at the time of interview. Title/Role reflect the most recent job.

Data Collection Procedure

In addition to answering the research questions by capturing employees' experiences of remaining silent and/or speaking up in relation to the factors that led to participants' behaviours and the impact that those experiences had on their well-being, the objective of the interview was also to use the findings to inform the development of the measurement instrument for the follow-up quantitative study.

***Interview Schedule***

The interview schedule was developed by designing questions to probe on five key topic areas to achieve the interview objective. The interview schedule (see Appendix 3) covered silence and/or voice experiences, support, impact, choice, and workplace environment. The questions aimed to explore gaps identified in the literature. First, the question around *silence and/or voice experiences* was asked to understand the nature of the concern that participants are withholding or have expressed as well as the factors internal and external to the organisation that influenced individual choice to remain silent and/or speak up about workplace issues of concern. It also explores why participants engage in silence and voice to uncover under what contexts and conditions that participants engage in those behaviours. Second, the question around *support* specifically explores the support from line manager for the concerns that participants raised. It also explores other forms of support that participants may have sought for as a result of remaining silent and not feeling heard by their line manager. Third, the question on how the silence and voice behaviours make participants feel explores the possible mental, emotional, and physical *impact* that remaining silent and speaking up can have on employees. Fourth, the question on *choice* explores participants' decision-making processes to understand how people make informed choices of remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern. Finally, the question on *workplace environment* specifically explores participants' interpersonal relationships with co-workers and the organisational culture to understand the workplace dynamics that may have led to participants' decision to remain silent or speak up about their concerns.

As the format of the interview is semi-structured, open-ended questions were asked that do not restrict interviewees' response options. It was made known to the interviewees the five key topic areas that I will ask questions on as well as the structure of the interview before I began the interview so as to reduce any anxiety that interviewees may have been feeling. I started the interview by asking interviewees to tell me a little about what they do and how their roles relate to their colleagues' roles to enable recollection of their jobs and workplaces as well as to allow them to feel comfortable speaking before moving into the main questions. This was also meant to provide the researcher with a context to the participants' experiences and

to allow the researcher to have a nuanced understanding of their employment backgrounds and their interpersonal relations with their colleagues.

This was followed by asking the interviewees to share their experiences of remaining silent or speaking up about workplace issues of concern depending on whether they have experienced either or both. The order was left for participants to decide as this gives the interviewees some sense of autonomy in what may seem like a conversation that is directed by the researcher. Wherever possible, I worked towards having a conversation that was equal. I had the impression that the interviewees were very willing to share very personal information relating to their experiences. Two participants stated that they have never shared the concerns that they disclosed during the interview with anyone else. This was different to what I expected as I had initially thought that participants who were more willing to participate in an interview would have spoken about their experiences with others, if not their line managers, either their colleagues or someone they knew on a personal basis. Upon reflecting on this, the recruitment process that emphasised on anonymity and having received ethical approval from the university may have given participants the reassurance that the interview would be a safe space and hence facilitated the recruitment of these two participants.

Depending on each participant's flow of thought, areas that coincided with the interview questions were explored further when opportunities arose to do so. This helped provide a natural flow to the interview to obtain richer data. The questioning process also included probes to explore examples given in more detail, including paraphrasing and seeking clarification on participants' responses. Long pauses on participant's end were used as indications to ask my question in a different manner or to move on to another question.

The interview ended with two questions to learn the reasons behind why the interviewees participated in the research and for them to share any experiences that they have not had the opportunity to speak about throughout the interview due to the design of the interview schedule to capture important areas that could add value to the research. It was a conscious decision to include these questions for three reasons: 1) to be in line with the principles of voice and free speech, 2) to be in line with the principles of a social constructionist epistemology in gathering data using a bottom-up approach, and 3) to allow participants to feel a sense of autonomy in sharing any information that they felt was important to them as opposed to what the researcher thinks is important to the research. This can facilitate the generation of information that the researcher may not have thought of gathering prior to the interview that collectively may give rise to the identification of new themes.

The interviews lasted an average of 32 minutes each and were recorded using an audio recording device to ensure that participants' statements are represented correctly in the study. Transcription of the audio recordings was done by the researcher and where possible, transcripts were produced within a week the interview took place to ensure a good recall of the interviewing experience and information shared by participants for higher quality transcribed data.

***Interview Process***

Although conducting a face-to-face interview with all participants would have been ideal in maintaining connection throughout the interview and in building trust with the participants in sharing their experiences and information that may be considered sensitive, this was not possible due to: (a) participants' location of residence (across the UK and various states in Malaysia), (b) my location of residence (East Midlands in the UK), and (c) time and cost considerations that needed to be taken into account. Therefore, to meet the interview objectives while maintaining practicality, face-to-face interviews were conducted where possible in the UK, and one-on-one interviews via online video calls were employed to facilitate data collection with the rest of the participants in the UK and all participants in Malaysia.

Online video calls allow the participants to put a face to the person who they are speaking to. It is also an important method in how the researcher can maintain connection and a better flow of conversation with the participants (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). A phone call was not considered as I may have difficulty feeling engaged with the participant and vice versa such as differentiating between interviewees pausing to think or pausing for the researcher to ask the next question. It also allows the researcher to observe participants' body language and facial expression, and to have an ongoing reflection of how the questions could be worded in a way that can elicit more effective responses as well as to detect any early signs of distress from the interviewees to ensure that I am empathic towards my participants. This is important to increase my awareness of nonverbal signs shown by participants to ensure that my participants are given the space and choice in a timely manner to pause or end their participation throughout the interview.

I started the interview by introducing myself, stating the objective of the research, followed by a reiteration of the topic of investigation. I also made it a point to remind the participants of the value of their input to the research and that they are free to share experiences that they feel comfortable sharing. After the researcher introduction, participants who took part in a face-to-face interview were briefed about the interview process and were asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix 2) should they agree to participate in the interview. Participants who took

part in online video calls were requested to complete the consent form before the interview was conducted.

Upon signing the consent form, one participant raised about the issue of being anonymised, which is akin to not being given a voice as their name and identity are not disclosed. Several participants who have actively pursued redress with their employers even went on to say that they do not worry about anonymity and in fact would be happy for their names to be disclosed as they see it as a way to further contribute to the subject matter and that their cases are already known to the public. With existing knowledge on how possible contact with persons with the intention to harass participants may affect participants' well-being, it is my role as the researcher to ensure that such situations are avoided and that any harm to participants arising out of the possible publication of this research is prevented. Therefore, participants' anonymity is being preserved.

During the whole process of data collection, there were a number of participants who experienced distress and were emotionally affected by the sharing of their experiences and were given the space and time to pause the interview to gather their emotions and thoughts, or end the interview, but, participants chose to continue with the interview. Participants expressed in email correspondence afterwards that they found the interview to be 'cathartic', although this was not the intended interview objective. A few participants also shared that although they did not know the other people participating in the research interview, they felt a sense of community knowing that they are not alone in their experience of remaining silent and/or speaking up about their concerns in the workplace. These may have been the reasons why the snowball sampling method was successful in recruiting further participants for the interview as initial participants had confidence in the researcher on their ability to conduct an interview that provided the sense of psychological safety and community that may not have been present at their workplaces.

As I was not trained professionally in counselling as well as the fact that the interview was not designed to function as a therapy session for participants, I made a conscious effort not to engage with participants in that manner. I would take participants back to the topic of discussion if participants move off-topic but at the same time ensured that participants were not interrupted in an abrupt manner. As the participants were given information prior to the interview on support services that they could access if they felt distressed through their participation in the interview, I did not provide further signposting so as not to put participants in a position that can feel disempowering.

Analysis

For my analysis, I found it important to first explore the factors that influence employees' decision about whether to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern. There are two reasons for this. First, this provides a deeper level of understanding on the way that remaining silent and speaking up affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia. Secondly, this allows the identification of variables that may have an impact on employee well-being that would contribute to Study 2, which examines the direct and indirect effects of these variables on employee well-being. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was selected to identify the influencing factors and behavioural outcomes, as well as to aid further investigations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-stage process was adopted to analyse the interview transcripts. The following describe the flow of analysis structured with reference to the six-stage approach:

***Stage One: Familiarising with the Data***

I began the analysis by transcribing the audio recordings, which helped with familiarisation of the interview data. I did a first reading of the transcripts while listening to the audio recording. During this time, I refined the transcripts and made initial notes of interesting data. I then did a preliminary interpretation during a re-reading of the transcripts.

***Stage Two: Generating Initial Codes***

I coded the transcripts according to the sequence of the interviews conducted first using pencil and paper, followed by coding the transcripts using the NVivo 9 software. A storyline was formed noting down initial codes using semantic coding while referring to the research questions throughout this process. This method helped at a later stage of analysis during theme development as it ensured that codes produced were aligned to the research aims and objectives (Stuckey, 2015). During the third reading, a coding list was developed across the data set and the list was expanded during the fourth reading.

***Stage Three: Searching for Themes***

At this stage, a coding template with themes and descriptors were produced, and there were four main themes identified for each research question.

***Stage Four: Reviewing Potential Themes***

I reviewed these themes to ensure connection and logic to form overarching themes using pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016). Specifically, I created an affinity diagram using pencil and paper to connect the different concepts together under logical themes. I took careful

consideration in developing the overarching themes and sub-themes as these themes would later form the basis for the identification of variables and appropriate measures to quantify participants' experiences in Study 2.

***Stage Five: Defining and Naming Themes***

I then defined the main themes and sub-themes to ensure they were reflective of the data. Ongoing analysis was done to generate clearer definitions and names for each theme. The theme development process was iterative and went through five rounds of review with a second researcher to check and refine the analysis. The final themes provided the direction for the investigation of the relationships between the different themes in the quantitative study.

***Stage Six: Producing the Report***

The next two sections provides details of the main and sub-themes captured from the data. Anonymised verbatims were used to describe and illustrate the themes identified. The final main themes for each research question are:

1. *What factors influence employees in making individual choices to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern?*

   The factors that influence employees' silence and voice decisions are:
   - Socialisation
   - Type of issue
   - Support for voice

2. *How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia?*

   a) The specific aspects of silence and voice that lead to different well-being outcomes are:
   - Reason for behaviour
   - Outcome of behaviour

   b) The well-being related outcomes as a result of silence and voice are:
   - Sense of self
   - Sense of belonging

The themes were identified using a deductive approach to search for codes that are related to influencing factors, behavioural outcomes, and employee well-being, followed by an inductive approach through the identification of concepts during the process of naming the themes that were not previously reported in the literature. The passive and active search for themes provide an actual reflection of the analysis (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). As an example, the sub-themes under 'Reason for behaviour' were identifed using a deductive approach by coding reasons for silence and voice using existing terms in the literature such as 'Prosocial' and 'Defensive'. 'Prosocial' was used to represent the extracts where participants either remained silent or spoke up to benefit other people or the organisation based on altruism or cooperative motives. However, there was a renaming of the term 'Defensive' to 'Pro-self' to represent extracts where participants wanted to protect themselves with the intention to avoid or relieve self from consequences that are perceived to be personally unpleasant.

In the course of the analysis, turnover intention was identified as another important outcome of the study next to psychological well-being in how silence and voice have affected participants, leading to an increase in disengagement by having thoughts of leaving their jobs. These two outcomes are presented under the main themes 'Sense of self' and 'Sense of belonging'.

It is important to note that the overall experience of interviewing the participants on the events that they described may have placed weight on the various themes that were identified and what I thought to be important in answering the research questions.

The findings of this data analysis support the premise that remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern are behaviours that employees actively engage in at work. Participants' decision-making processes reveal the factors that influenced individual choices to remain silent or speak up under specific contexts and conditions. Participants have also described these behaviours as having an impact on their well-being. I will provide details of the themes identified using verbatims to illustrate the participants' experiences. In the next section, I will present the analysis for the first research question. It will be followed by the analysis for the second research question. I will then provide a summary of the findings for this qualitative study.

### 4.3 Themes that address Research Question 1

**Table 4.2 Factors that influence employee silence and voice decisions**

| Main themes | Sub-themes | Descriptors |
|---|---|---|
| Socialisation | Culture | Personal identity |
| | Upbringing | Beliefs |
| | Personal experiences | Values |
| Type of issue | Task-related | Concern for self |
| | Person-related | Concern for others |
| Support for voice | Supervisor support | Leadership style |
| | | Communication practices |
| | Organisational culture | Power distance |
| | | Espoused values vs Enacted Values |
| | | Organisational processes |

<u>Socialisation</u>

The initial theme that appeared prominently in the data in relation to the factors influencing employees to decide whether to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern is socialisation. As discussed in the review of literature in Chapter 2, individuals learn cultural systems to behave in ways that are considered acceptable within society. Participants shared their perceptions of societal culture and how they view cultural differences. Their perceptions provided insights into the role that culture had in forming their beliefs about silence and voice. Upbringing and personal experiences were also part of the socialisation process that helped shape their identity. Many participants report that the beliefs and values formed through the socialisation process serve as guiding principles influencing their choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern.

***Culture***

Participants raised societal culture as influencing their self-development. They described how societal culture affected their professional life in relation to remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern. There were perceptions of notable differences between the Asian and Western cultures. Participants view societal culture as a barrier in speaking up about workplace issues of concern in Malaysia. A participant expressed her frustration through the way she singled out the Asian culture to describe the authoritarian style of management in organisations:

*"The Asian culture will be the one, oh sorry, everything authority, uhm, everything must listen and there's hierarchy."* (P20MY)

The participant presented the Asian workplace culture as having a system where employees are ranked based on organisational status. She perceives members of the organisation with lower ranking as having lower status in the organisation. Further to that, she described hierarchy as an unavoidable practice that Asians need to accept without question comparable to "this is how it works". She also views the culture in society and the workplace as synonymous. This shared sentiment amongst many Malaysian participants revolved around the unwritten rule that there are "powerful figures" within their organisations that they must obey. From another perspective, in reference to having conference calls with her colleagues from Western culture, another Malaysian participant who works in a multinational company commented that this was a difference in communication style, which she sought to minimise:

*"…they [people from Western cultures] may feel like, oh, why are you so quiet why don't you talk about things but then again it's just how we are right I mean, un…unless it's really to be spoken about and then if not like, for them, to them, they will just bring up any single thing. That's, it's just their style, it's the style of communication which is fine. It's just different you know. The culture differences that each country may have, so uhm just need to understand that."* (P06MY)

In this context, her acceptance of cultural differences appears to be a coping method with being perceived differently by her Western colleagues. Her view that cultural differences are to be 'understood' reinforces the idea that the culture is an inherent part of their communication style, requiring empathy and acceptance by colleagues from a different culture. She added that it is common for Asians to speak up only when they have issues of "top priority" that can't be "swept under the rug".

From the perspective of a UK participant, P27UK shared her perceptions of the dilemma that people from a culture different from hers may experience when deciding between speaking up and remaining silent about workplace issues of concern. She views "keeping your head down" in certain cultures in the world as a survival strategy and a better alternative to ensure job security. Her perception suggests the self-protective aspects of silence and an understanding that people from these cultures may put themselves in precarious situations should they raise their concerns.

Participants also described how people from different ethnic backgrounds might engage in silence and voice behaviours differently in the workplace. As one Malaysian participant illustrates:

*"…especially Malay people, they are more to like, they want to be in the family, like inclusive, so they would rather when they are disagree with like what their friend did, they will remain silent, they, they would not want to uhm uh betray their friend in front of the boss…"* (P19MY)

The participant described the perceived dilemma that her colleagues from the Malay culture have in speaking up about workplace issues of concern. She used the word "family" to describe the tightness in the relationship between colleagues within the Malay community often associated with the in-group mindset in collectivism as discussed in Chapter 2. This mindset also indicates the strong influence of societal culture in the workplace as the concept of family is integrated into the unwritten rules at work.

***Upbringing***

Culture can be reproduced within a society when beliefs and values are either explicitly or implicitly passed on from one generation to another. Participants mentioned upbringing as an influencing factor that shaped their beliefs about silence and voice. P08MY stated that her early years revolved around her parents since she is the only child. Her parents had a strong influence in purposefully ingraining the idea of silence in her. As she described:

*"I remember very early on even from six, seven years old I was basically, my mum and dad have this perception only study and don't make a lot of noise and that has been very consistently drummed into me from very early on so how to say, the good girl will be the one that is quiet, the good girl will be the one that is just doing your work, that, that conditioning is so strong to the point that I no longer know how to voice out myself despite being in situations that is basically not working for me."*

Culture can also operate as an implicit mechanism of socialisation. Participants learnt to behave in ways that they believe is acceptable within society without being explicitly instructed to do so. Participants described instances where they observed their parents' silent behaviours, viewing that as the way to conduct themselves in the workplace. For P07UK, she attributed her character to her parents, who influenced her work ethic. She stated that she is akin to her parents who "do not push back work" even if she felt overworked, do not say "no", and "just head down and get on with it". P07UK modelled her parents' silent behaviours as a lesson learnt on navigating the workplace when dealing with workplace issues of concern

rather than being told how she should behave. From these examples, it is evident that the authority figures in children's lives, such as parents, have a strong influence on adulthood.

Participants also talked about how authority figures in their personal lives other than their parents influenced the development of their values, which in turn guided their choices. P24UK stated that he speaks up about workplace issues of concern because he has high moral values. For him, the notion that "right is right, wrong is wrong" was instilled by his grandmother from a young age. He perceives speaking up to correct a perceived "wrong" as a moral choice, indicating that values can influence the decision on whether to engage in silence or voice.

***Personal experiences***

Participants' personal experiences outside their family life have also shaped who they are in relation to their silence and voice preferences. It was evident in the examples how they attributed their choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern to their experiences during childhood and at work.

P03UK recalled having negative emotions towards another child who behaved unfairly during sporting activities, and said that this shaped him to "love everything to be fair". He added that his negative experience of being treated unfairly as a child made him realise the importance of speaking up for others at work who are treated unfairly. He also shared the importance of a line manager as a role model. Observing the way his manager "deal with situations or deal with people or speak to people" shaped how the participant treated others as well. Having the support from his line manager to "go ahead and try out those things" increased his self-esteem as it gave him the space to make mistakes and learn from them. It also gave him the confidence to speak up about the concerns he had with other managers.

Participants have also indicated their silence and voice preferences by comparing themselves to their colleagues at work. P30UK, who usually engages in voice, sees herself as a person who is "quite open" and stated that she talks "more easily" than others. Her behaviour is contextual as she compared her level of openness to that of her colleagues. She referred to her identity as a person who speaks up more often than others to indicate her preference for voice behaviour. In relation to engaging in silence, P16MY chose to remain silent about a concern as he did not want to "call more attention" to himself. As his colleagues remained silent about the issue where "everybody just let that slide", he decided not to speak up as well.

These examples indicate how socialisation in the form of personal experiences, either in childhood or more recent adulthood can influence individual choice on whether to engage in silence or voice.

Type of issue

This theme refers to participants' evaluations on whether the issues of concern were easy to raise and worth raising based on the nature of the problem. Participants also considered the extent of how personal or distant these issues are to them. Concerns that are perceived to be subjective influenced participants to remain silent about them. Participants are more comfortable speaking up about issues that they perceive to be undeniably wrong. When participants described their thought processes in deciding to remain silent or speak up, they made a distinction between task-related or person-related issues of concern. Participants perceive the former as more "objective", whilst the latter as more "subjective". In analysing the two types of issues, it was apparent that participants consider task-related issues easier to raise compared to person-related issues. Participants remain silent about person-related issues due to their subjectivity. As one participant shared:

*"…it's very simple when it's very black and white. When I know it's wrong and it's something that needs to be fixed for the well-being of the firm, it's very simple and it's very easy for me to bring it up to him. Uhm, because I know I'm actually correct. Uh, so it's not, it's not, it's not a grey area like emotions or the way somebody feels."* (P15MY)

***Task-related***

The task-related issues described by participants are operational problems relating to a work process or function. It ranges from the introduction of systems that did not make sense to policies not implemented according to the guidelines set within the organisation and unethical work practices. It is also notable that examples offered by participants included situations where the primary concern is related to the individuals themselves or other people. It would seem from the examples given that where the issues are task-related, concerns for the self are seen as legitimate reasons to raise the matter, but concerns for others give extra motivation for speaking up, particularly where there is a power imbalance.

*Concern for self*

In one example, a nursery apprentice who received £3 an hour and working 40 hours a week expressed her dissatisfaction with the salary structure in relation to her work hours:

*"I wasn't happy with the fact that they did the minimum wage and then wasn't training us. And I also wasn't happy with how when we get to work, so our hours on our contract said like 7:30 and then I'd arrive at like 7:30 to start working and then they say no, you should've arrived 10 minutes earlier to set up the room. It's like well no, we should be paid for that. Like you can't just. It's 10 minutes but then you times that by like how many days in a week and stuff, it kinda just seems like we're already being paid minimum wage, like why are you asking us to work extra? So basically uhm like we got told that a lot but then one time I just said to the Room Leader like, no. Like why why have you not contracted this?"* (P22UK)

From this excerpt, it was also evident that P22UK expected to be trained as an apprentice. However, she did not receive the training as promised. It did not make sense to her to arrive 10 minutes earlier as the management did not provide a reasonable explanation. The participant found this to be a clear breach of the contract and therefore felt she had clear grounds to raise the issue.

Another participant also raised a task-related issue that she perceives to be a legitimate concern. It is related to a diversity workshop with a session describing only eight protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 in the UK. P30UK, who identifies as a gay woman, described getting clarification from the organisers right after the session regarding why they left sexual orientation out of the discussion:

*"So this is the organisation where I didn't feel safe to speak. I thought I have to speak. So I went up to the two, woman and man, straight white man. And I said, that's really good, but you left the gays out. And I said you left the gays out, and they say, 'no we didn't'. It's a protected characteristic, nine, and you left the gays out and they went, no we didn't. They didn't say, oh no, I'm so sorry, you're right. I felt really like, oh okay so you left the gays out and now you say to the gay woman, probably the only gay one in the room, no we didn't. So, what have you learned, gentlemen? What have you learned? Uhm nothing apparently."*

She mentioned that the organisers dismissed her, saying they did not leave out any protected characteristics. Although the participant felt unsafe to speak up in this workplace, not only did she seek for clarification after the session, she also shared that she provided feedback in the workshop evaluation survey circulated to the whole organisation regarding this matter because it was too important to her not to raise it. She felt justified in doing so as she perceived the issue as relating to a verifiable omission, which felt personal to her due to her sexual orientation. Leaving sexual orientation out felt as if she was left out of the discussion, making her feel invisible.

In another example, P09UK described how she eventually spoke up about her line manager's behaviour that would have affected her credibility if she had remained silent:

*"…the final straw for me, the line, was when he told me to put something into a report that I hadn't worked on, because they charged the client without delivering any output. And for me, that was an ethical line I was not prepared to cross and I said to him, 'You are the boss of this team, you can put in that report what you want but I don't want my name on it'. And he said, 'You'll do what you're told'. I said, 'I don't think I will'. And I walked out and made a, a formal complaint."*

From the encounter that P09UK had with her line manager, the participant had previous negative experiences with this line manager that she did not regard as being task-related. In this instance, the participant deliberated on the nature of the issue. Not delivering the promise made to a customer and charging a payment for work not done is considered an unethical work practice to the participant. Therefore, the participant finally spoke up when she got to the point where she had an "objective" (task-related) concern to raise and that speaking up is seen as a clear choice and the right thing to do.

*Concern for others*

Three participants from the healthcare sector shared that when the concern involved patient safety, they would put the patients above themselves regardless of the negative consequences of speaking up about their line manager's or co-worker's negligence. P27UK highlighted the risk to patients by saying, "lots of other women, they're going to die before they should if I don't do something about this". In the healthcare sector, participants regard patient safety as being of the highest importance. The participant perceives the death of a patient due to negligence as a duty of healthcare professionals to raise.

In situations where the concern affected not just their colleague but also their patient made them view the issue as important to raise. A veterinarian shared this:

*"he [the boss] very roughly manhandled the dog and then he put the tablet in, which pretty badly manhandled the dog. The nurse saw it just walked out the building and never walked back. I didn't witness it, I was in reception that time and went into the kind of aftermath she relayed what had happened."* (P10UK)

From P10UK's experience, the issue of concern did not directly affect her but primarily the animal and her colleague. However, she also views it as a concern due to the way her superior

carried out his job. The procedure was against the guidelines of how to treat the animals that they care for. The participant felt that it was unacceptable since he is “the boss” and should know better how to perform the said procedure skillfully. She subsequently spoke up to her superior on behalf of her colleague who remained silent. Although her colleague remained silent about the concern, walking out the building is an indication of her disagreement. This is an interesting incident as speaking up may not necessarily involve verbal exchange but an action, which can speak louder than words.

The examples related to concern for others, whether colleagues, patients, or customers, indicate a willingness to overcome the potentially negative consequences of speaking out in favour of the greater good. This desire to help others appears particularly strongly represented when there is the potential for unquestionable and significant harm (i.e., death, injury, or trauma) and where there might be a power difference between the recipient and the person carrying out the task in question.

Although it appears clear that participants find it easier to raise task-related rather than person-related issues of concern, there are nevertheless some perceived barriers even in relation to speaking out on task-related issues. For instance, a participant described difficulty raising a task-related issue of concern currently affecting her colleagues in other teams that may affect her team in the months to come. P19MY said that she did not want to be perceived negatively by the upper management about a concern she had regarding the restructuring of the departments in her organisation that required terminating employees to reduce the size of the teams for cost-cutting purposes. The downsizing would mean having to end the employment of several employees, which will affect the livelihood of those terminated and the morale and productivity of the team members who she retain. She perceived that the downsizing may be more damaging to the business. However, she shared that the upper management had yet to implement the restructuring on her team. Therefore, she did not feel that she had the “right to interfere” with the decision, although she was trying to prevent the damage to her team and business. She also did not have an alternative solution for the upper management other than to refuse the downsizing. This example indicates that raising task-related issues as a preventative measure without an alternative solution or concrete evidence of the negative consequences can be perceived as unfounded and hence, a challenge to raise.

***Person-related***

Person-related issues are different to task-related issues where the emphasis is primarily on concerns surrounding an individual’s behaviour. More than half of the participants provided examples of person-related issues that they did not speak up about. Examples described were

related to the poor behaviours of line managers, upper management, and peers. Some inappropriate behaviours outlined by participants include emotional blackmailing, making discriminatory remarks, unfair treatment, aggressiveness, hostility, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and bullying.

The example given by P20MY illustrates the difference between person-related issues from task-related issues. P20MY stated that if the issue of concern had a direct impact on her work, she "would be very happy to give feedback no matter how high". However, the situation would be slightly different if it was an issue that she can "live with" or that concerns her line manager's behaviour. She would feel reluctant to speak up about his behaviour as she needs to "maintain an amiable relationship" with him. The participant expressed feeling worried that not maintaining a good relationship with her line manager may also affect her career progression.

Here again, within the person-related issues of concern, it is notable that participants referred to some incidents where their primary concern was for themselves, and some where there was primarily concern for others. Participants described the challenge in speaking up for others particularly in situations where the participants are observers as there is ambiguity in how others actually experience the event. For concerns that are personally experienced by the participants, while the feelings are certain, they indicated remaining silent due to various reasons related to perceived negative consequences as a result of speaking up.

*Concern for self*

For issues of concern that affected participants directly, P10UK expressed how raising issues concerning people's behaviours when they relate to interpersonal interactions as opposed to task-related matters "felt really personal". It seemed to project that you did not like the person or how they are as a person. Therefore she hadn't spoken out for four years about her line manager's behaviour due to "fear of offending".

Participants also described incidences where they decided to speak up about workplace issues of concern affecting them in ways that may, in turn, affect others. P17MY, a teacher in a pre-school, spoke about the connection she made regarding the effects that her frustration with an interpersonal interaction with her colleague can have on the children she teaches. She was concerned about maintaining her integrity as a teacher. She described the encounter she had with her colleague:

*"…on that day, that tone of voice, that way of speaking to me was unacceptable. Uhm, I wouldn't speak to someone like that and I know that if I had kept quiet on that day, resentment will build up in me and then that doesn't help anybody. I would feel annoyed, she would feel annoyed, it will affect…and I work with kids. So, whatever I am feeling can affect the children. And if I am going to teach children to be assertive and speak up, I need to practice what I preach."*

In this instance, the participant was concerned about being committed to her role as a "good" teacher. She decided to speak up as she views it as congruent to her teaching. While speaking up would benefit the children she teaches, this concern involves primarily preserving her image of a teacher who upholds her principles. It is interesting that although the teacher had concerns for herself, in that she found the colleague's manner of speaking unacceptable, it was almost as though she needed to include the additional concern for others in order to justify her decision to speak out.

*Concern for others*

Whilst concern for others in relation to task-related issues was shown to be a factor that motivated speaking up, the situation is not as clear cut in relation to person-related issues. For instance, a participant who works as a counsellor in a university was confused with whether or not she should raise her concern about the doctors' behaviours towards the nurses. She shared the situation as follows:

*"… the doctors have a problematic uh behaviour uhm can be considered abusive […] bosses shouting, uhm throwing things to people, showing their anger uhm that's like, it was as if that that throwing is them touching the person like, so it's that they're they're so free with with that kind of behaviour […] the person who is doing all this super tantrum, this behaviour is actually very friendly with the staff on a day to day, they laugh, they joke, they play around, they eat together."* (P14MY)

Although it was seemingly clear that the doctors' abusive behaviours were unacceptable to the participant through her framing of the behaviours as being "problematic", the doctors' friendly demeanour on a daily basis caused her to question her judgement. As an observer, she was unsure if the staff were affected by the doctors' abusive behaviours despite the fact that she found it to be a concern. The participant appears to be worried that her case is not strong enough to present the issue as a serious workplace issue of concern. Hence, she had not spoken up about it. This indicates that there is an extra layer of complexity in relation to person-related issues where the primary concern is for other people. In complete contrast to

task-related issues, which were seen as imperative to speak up where there was concern for others, these person-related issues are perceived to be even less clear-cut when the recipient of the behaviour is other than the self.

Support for voice

This theme highlights participants' perceptions of the support they receive from their line managers in addressing their workplace issues of concern. It also includes whether systems exist within the organisation that allows voices to be heard that influence whether participants would remain silent or speak up. Two sub-themes were identified: supervisor support and organisational culture.

***Supervisor support***

Almost all participants described how the behaviour of their line managers was used as information to decide whether they would remain silent or speak up about the concerns that they had in the workplace. Participants have expressed the pervasiveness of the consequences of speaking up that influenced their choice to decide to remain silent. As one participant describes:

*"…eventually you always have a choice but somehow you don't feel like you have a choice I think. So like in my mind I was just like, yea there's no point of you saying anything because we're not going to win this argument. So then I chose not to say anything, although because of her behaviours that made me feel like I didn't really have a choice."* (P21UK)

*Leadership style*

Participants speak up about their problems at work when they perceive their line managers as open to voice and transparent. They described feeling more comfortable speaking up to their line managers as they perceive the relationship to be trusting. Feeling psychologically safe in the work environment due to perceived supervisor support has been shown to foster a climate that allows employees to feel safe raising issues of concern as discussed in Chapter 2. P17MY, who trusts her line manager, said this:

*"…she's the kind who focuses on solutions rather than on what's going wrong, so it was uhm okay to bring it up to her because I know that it wouldn't escalate to a direction that was not okay."*

It was evident from this example that participants appreciate line managers who focus on coming up with solutions rather than just focusing on the problems. The trust that participants have for their line manager is reflected in being able to predict the line manager's behaviours and that they are confident in their line manager's competence in dealing with workplace issues of concern raised.

Participants have also expressed that supportive line managers make them feel comfortable in speaking up about concerns around ways to improve organisational performance. This example was evident in the case of P05MY, who described how the way her line manager speaks to her was vital in making her feel respected, cared for, and valued. Therefore, she was more open in speaking up about her concerns. She spoke up about the unclear direction of the start-up company that she works in, which prompted the management to set new strategies to take the company forward. Similarly, P29UK, who has a line manager who uses coaching techniques and frequently asks his opinion about work-related matters, expressed this:

*"…she's never kind of asking me, do this do this do this. She's more like, what do you think we should do? And then she kind of coaches around that idea, to kind of help me develop how I think about things […] she kind of trusts my perspective on those things so if I do say my workload is too high, she'll trust that, because yea, we have this relationship where we work so closely together and that she, that she kind of trusts my opinions on things."*

These two examples indicate that collaborative working by asking for input is a feature of building trust in a superior-subordinate relationship. Participants with line managers who were not open or were selectively open about discussing concerns felt that they could not speak up about the issues they had. Participants with hostile line managers also felt uncomfortable speaking up about issues they had. Some of these participants described their line managers as people who did not want to "rock the boat" (P28UK), a "huge bully" (P12MY), and someone who would "bite your head off" (P09UK). The passive and aggressive behaviours described by the participants indicate that if they spoke up, they believed they would face severe negative consequences.

Further to that, some participants have described how their line managers' inflexible style of leadership can undermine trust and psychological safety. P21UK felt that he could not speak up to his line manager as she was the kind of person where "it's kind of her way or the highway". The participant had been given a different expectation during his interview. The line manager told him that they would provide full autonomy to employees and involve them in the

decision-making process. However, now that he has experienced working in the company, he mentioned it was just 'lip service':

*"From what I was kinda told at the start, uhm when I first joined the company, uhm I kinda have the full autonomy and responsibility for developing uh the business and to create sales but that just wasn't the case. I guess you just have to yea you just lose kind of all trust and faith in it."*

Here, the participant's line manager did not meet the pre-employment expectation in allowing him to make his own decisions. The erosion of trust due to the absence of supervisor support leading to silence can be linked to the outcome of a breach of the psychological contract discussed in Chapter 2, where his line manager did not uphold the promise made during the interview. Hence, he chose to remain silent about his concern.

A Malaysian participant also provided examples of the authoritarian leadership style of his line manager, who owns the company he works for. He remained silent about a concern that he had about another manager's hostile behaviour towards her staff. He described his line manager as "the old typical mentality boss that thinks being a boss is being god". There was a need for him to be selective in the concerns that he raises to this boss. He shared this:

*"So, I actually know the things that I can bring up and things I can't bring up. So I can bring up things that are work related, in terms of, let's say someone does something wrong, if she does something wrong in terms of the work, I can bring it up very easily, it's not an issue because he'll listen to me, but when it's in terms of emotions, my boss is a very old school boss so, he doesn't do well with emotions or things like that. He's just, he's all about the work. So, having worked with him for a very long time, I know that he won't respond very well to it and he won't actually listen to it."* (P15MY)

While he perceives his superior to be autocratic and lacking in emotions, he made the distinction between task-related and person-related issues in that it is easier to raise task-related issues but not person-related issues. This indicates that even with authoritarian figures, it is possible to speak up about issues but only those that are task-related. It is evident here that leadership style is a factor that influences the types of issues people feel able to raise, which is also reflected in the examples provided in the previous sub-theme.

In more severe cases, some participants were shut down by their line managers when they raised their concerns. Some line managers told them explicitly to keep quiet about their concerns, while other line managers asked participants to sign "gagging clauses". The non-disclosure agreement that some participants have signed forbids participants from exposing the organisations' malpractices. These actions further reinforce silence where other employees within those organisations do not communicate unfavourable information to their line managers due to the perception that it is not welcomed. In the examples illustrated, participants were given explicit instructions not to express their concerns and are therefore reluctant to speak up due to the severe negative consequences.

*Communication practices*

The practice that line managers have also played an important part in creating the "space" for participants to speak up about their concerns. Line managers whose "door is always open" helped participants to perceive that they can provide feedback and speak up about their concerns when they need to. As for P23MY, she shared one of her line manager's practices called "Take Five":

*"Five minutes after any project, we just sit down and say what went well, what didn't go well and how we can continue to make it better."*

Having weekly meetings was also raised by P26MY as a way his line manager created transparency within the team to discuss any work concerns they had. Participants perceive the frequency of the meetings as their line managers being caring and helping them remove any obstacles that may be hindering their work progress.

***Organisational culture***

Participants shared how the leadership team sets the tone for how things are practised within the organisation, which created the existing workplace culture.

*Power distance*

Power distance refers to the perceived differences in power status between the superior and subordinate as discussed in Chapter 2. When the leadership team is open to voice, participants felt willing to raise concerns as they were confident that it was "never for the sake of saying that you are wrong". P02UK, who is an early years teacher who remained silent after battling for years "to be heard", described the "them and us" mentality of her management in this manner:

*"Well, they need to come over here first of all and have a look before they start criticising. But they wouldn't come over. They need to walk across the playground and it might be cold. You know they gotta come out of their heated office and children in their early years has snotty noses, and you know, they might wipe their nose on their hand and then touch you, want to hold your hand. You can visibly see them back off!"*

Here, the participant described the management as not wanting to understand the challenges she faced. Having to leave the heated office implies that the management team is in a very comfortable position. The participant felt that they could not empathise with the hardship of being an early years teacher. It also indicates that the management team does not value early years teachers since they perceive it as being a "dirty job" and considers it as bottom-rung in the education hierarchy.

Hierarchical structures influence participants to engage in silence. For some participants, the impact of a hierarchical structure was more pronounced when the leadership practices were perceived to be biased. Participants described the biases as allowing only employees at a "senior level and fairly number of years" (P04MY) to have the opportunity to speak, as well as being "obsessed with grade" and being less able to be criticised "the higher up you are" (P09UK). While it may be expected for participants in Malaysia to provide such examples in their workplaces since high power distance is a feature of Malaysian society, this feature also influences silence and voice decisions for UK participants working in organisations with traditional structures.

*Espoused values vs Enacted values*

This descriptor refers to values that are communicated publicly by the organisation contrary to the values that employees perceive the organisation actually values as discussed in Chapter 2. Participants pointed out the lack of integrity in the top management of their organisation in addressing their concerns. In some cases, there may be whistleblowing policies, but actions were not carried out accordingly. P27UK illustrated this:

*"They have a culture of looking like some sort of uh fantastic organisation who can never do anything wrong. Shining example of healthcare to the rest of the world. And unfortunately it's not, it's not the way and it's becoming even less so over the years. It's a lot, it's about, it's about money, it's about reputations, it's about people in high pay, powerful jobs who do not want to have their jobs at risk…"*

The frustration that P27UK has was in how the healthcare organisation that she worked in focused more on their image and financial position. She found the workplace culture to be inauthentic and lacks integrity. The management team presents a different reality of her workplace to the public, which she believes is an unhealthy and toxic work environment. Another participant expressed:

*"there's no point having x, y, z policies and procedures in place if no one's actually kind of using it, utilising them."* (P21UK)

These two examples is evidence to suggest that organisations have policies and procedures in place but these are only for "display" and not meant to be used to facilitate voice.

By contrast, P05MY shared how her COO and CEO created a culture of respect, and it "cascaded" to the rest of the organisation. This effort resulted in her co-workers adopting the value as well. She was grateful for the initiative as it fostered a sense of trust in speaking up about the concerns she had. Meanwhile, for two participants, the low levels of trust they had for their Human Resources department for being impartial hindered them from speaking up about their concerns. These participants perceive the Human Resources department as being on the side of the management team who participants do not trust. Therefore, speaking up about issues related to the management team is perceived not to result in favourable outcomes for the employees.

It is crucial for the leadership team to embrace the organisation's values as it fosters trust and sets the tone for how employees within the organisation should behave. Furthermore, it can have a ripple effect where employees emulate leaders' behaviours in living the values.

*Organisational processes*

Organisations that have poor processes of supporting employees in raising workplace issues of concern created the perception in participants that it is not worth speaking up, or worse, damaging to them. A participant who experienced sexual harassment in the past and was blamed by the management for the violation that happened to them expressed how they stopped speaking up about any sexual harassment concerns they could cope with. The participant felt that being blamed for the violation is worse than suffering in silence. Participants also described the long wait for feedback on the issues they raised as pointless in speaking up. These participants view exercising voice as similar to not doing so. Not being updated by the management nor having a definite deadline for effecting the changes is seen as unsupportive by the participants. The indefinite deadline reduced their confidence that

change can happen. The lack of support for the process led to a lack of trust in the management.

By contrast, participants gave examples of how clear policies and guidelines on specific steps to take should they encounter problems, issues, or bad practices made it easy to speak up. P20MY shared that her company sends an email reminder to all employees every six months "to do things correctly", which helps her refresh her knowledge as she works in a large organisation with many policies. Participants working in organisations that took employee feedback seriously by forming committees and having annual employee feedback surveys and regular updates on the results felt they were listened to and had more avenues to raise their concerns. Therefore, having support for the process is crucial as it encourages people to speak up about issues and influences voice behaviour.

### 4.4 Themes that address Research Question 2 (Part a)

**Table 4.3 Aspects of silence and voice leading to different well-being outcomes**

| Main themes | Sub-themes | Descriptors |
|---|---|---|
| Reason for behaviour | Pro-self silence | Protection of identity<br>Emotional protection<br>Instrumental protection |
| | Pro-self voice | |
| | Prosocial silence | |
| | Prosocial voice | |
| Outcome of behaviour | Actual outcome | Better<br>No change<br>Worse |
| | Outcome expectation | Expected<br>Unexpected |

From the interview analyses, participants gave clear examples of how their well-being was affected by the actual outcome of their behaviour. However, it was not clear in some examples if the themes 'Reason for behaviour' or 'Outcome expectation' on its own had an effect on the state of their well-being. The primary purpose of separating these two main themes is to provide visibility on the components that may have an influence on employee well-being based on participants' experiences. (This separation is further elucidated in Chapter 5, where I present the results of the statistical analyses conducted in Study 2 that reveal the significance of association between these themes and well-being).

Reason for behaviour

This theme refers to why participants remained silent or spoke up about the workplace issues of concern they had. The reasons provided relate to participant's evaluation of the three factors (socialisation, type of issue, support for voice) identified in the previous section that have an influence on the participant's choice on whether to engage in silence or voice. There are essentially two categories of reasons for speaking up or remaining silent: pro-self reasons and prosocial reasons. Pro-self behaviours serve to protect self from negative consequences, whereas prosocial behaviours serve to protect others from negative consequences. As each of these two reasons can be applied to both silence and voice, this gives rise to four distinct sub-themes: pro-self silence; pro-self voice; prosocial silence; prosocial voice. These four sub-themes were identified as a result of participants' behaviours that map onto the concept of individualism and collectivism as discussed in chapter 2. Pro-self indicates an individualistic approach, seeing the self as fully autonomous and focusing on self-protection, whereas prosocial indicates a collectivistic approach, seeing the self as part of a group and focusing on protecting similar others. While UK participants are expected to exhibit individualism and participants from Malaysia are expected to exhibit collectivism, participants from both the UK and Malaysia provided examples of how these behaviours have an influence on their well-being.

***Pro-self silence***

Pro-self silence is defined as employees withholding workplace issues of concern to protect themselves with the intention to avoid or relieve themselves from consequences that are perceived to be personally unpleasant. Many participants used the words 'self-protection' and 'defence' when describing the reasons why they remained silent about their concerns. One of the main reasons was to protect their self-image and reputation. As P08MY expressed:

*"Fear of being judged is one, fear of losing myself for some reason as if as in, if I were to voice out I might, I might lose the image that I am this certain person, that I am level-headed or that I'm neutral or that I can be a friend with everyone."*

For this participant, speaking up about concerns in her workplace appear to be perceived as someone "losing their cool" and tarnishes their reputation of being an impartial person. Speaking up about a concern related to a person's behaviour is also seen as "cutting" social bond with others, with the consequence that one may not be viewed as being kind or pleasant.

Participants also did not want to project their vulnerability or be seen as "problematic" or "difficult". For instance, P06MY, who received a promotion to be a manager, did not want to

be seen as weak for not coping well with her workload. In another example, P07UK did not want to be viewed by others as “telling tales”. Participants perceive these labels as causing more harm to their well-being than if they were to remain silent. Here, speaking up about person-related concerns is perceived to be a form of gossip instead of being acknowledged as a legitimate problem that can potentially harm organisational performance.

Victim-blaming was also a reason that participants wanted to avoid, leading them to choose to remain silent. P25UK, whose male colleague sexually assaulted her, did not feel that she could raise her concern as she felt embarrassed that this incident had happened to her. She considered speaking up as having too high of a risk at first due to the perception that the “society as a whole tends to victim-blame” that she decided not to reveal the sexual assault until much later. She said this: “I try to keep it a secret because I didn’t want anyone to know because I was so ashamed.” She did not reveal it as she was still able to cope with the incident initially. Another participant, P01MY, whose line manager sexually harassed her, remained silent to avoid giving her management team the reason to blame her for the incident. She expressed: “…in order to avoid the victim-blaming that might happen, I just keep silent about it, yea.” These two participants described the protective aspects of silence as being the most desirable outcome. Firstly, the issues are of a sensitive nature to them. Secondly, they expressed that the consequences may potentially be more detrimental to their well-being, which is not a risk that they want to take.

Several participants remained silent for reasons other than victim-blaming. They perceive speaking up as a risk to their job security. P06MY wanted to be seen as “tough” as she was worried that it would affect her performance review and how her line manager would evaluate her at the end of the year. A few participants were concerned that they would lose their job, while two participants did not want to be responsible for causing others to lose their jobs. In another example, P21UK, who left his job, remained silent about his concerns while working in the company. He was afraid that it would affect his future employment if he left the job on bad terms. Needing a reference from previous employment was too important to risk that he would prefer to remain silent about the concerns that made him leave his job. Participants also shared the perceived negative impact on their well-being by speaking up. Hence, they preferred to remain silent.

***Pro-self voice***

This theme is defined as expressing workplace issues of concern with the intention to avoid or relieve self from consequences that are perceived to be personally unpleasant. Participants who spoke up for themselves stated that they did not want to face any negative consequences

and wanted to improve their situation and well-being. Being someone who has had over thirty years of experience, P11UK expressed:

*"…if I feel I'm to be supported, I can be a supporter first. And if I don't want to end up in a position where I'm disempowered, then I have to empower myself. So, if I, if I go silent, the only person who gets hurt is me. Either because I see somebody else suffering or because it will create a situation which I suffer and it's kind of a no-brainer really, you know."*

The participant perceives that remaining silent can feel weak. To feel strong and in control, she believes that one would need to stand up for oneself. Seeing others suffer and personally suffering in silence is viewed as psychologically harmful to the self. Therefore, remaining silent is not an option.

In another example, P28UK, a member of CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development), stated that they have a code of conduct that needs to be upheld. Acting against the code of conduct by not speaking up about workplace issues of concern may mean having the status taken off her, which will affect her well-being. She went on to say that as a Human Resources Director, she also felt the responsibility and saw it as an inherent part of her job to speak up about the concerns that she had.

***Prosocial silence***

This theme is defined as withholding workplace issues of concern to benefit other people or the organisation, based on altruism or cooperative motives. Participants who remained silent to protect others expressed that they engaged in silence as they did not want to undermine their line managers, wanted to protect the image and jobs of their colleagues, and to maintain harmony. Participants described that maintaining harmony can help preserve their well-being. In one example, P12MY employed silence as a strategy as they felt that their line manager was threatened by the high quality of their work. They described previous efforts made by this line manager to reduce the interaction that this participant had with the top leadership. To maintain a "safe" relationship with their line manager, the participant decided to agree to his demands:

*"I know he's insecure so, I basically just follow what he needs. He, he needs to feel safe, you know and then just like, keep my head down, don't say much unless he specifically asked…"*

In another situation, P10UK gave an example of how speaking up about her concern will have severe negative consequences to the organisation. It may mean that her boss will get "struck

off". Since her boss owns the business, that would damage the entire business leading to all her colleagues losing their jobs, which she perceives can affect everyone's well-being. She also views silence as hope for a better future for her colleagues as well as the organisation.

***Prosocial voice***

This final theme is defined as expressing workplace issues of concern to benefit other people or the organisation based on altruism or cooperative motives. Speaking up for others was evident in participants who wanted to protect their colleagues, customers and organisations. Participants view voice behaviour as wanting to improve the workplace environment and organisational performance. P31UK, a consultant physician, who was aware of the Head of Midwifery's bullying behaviour towards the nursing staff, stood up for his nursing colleagues by raising his concern with the Medical Director. He spoke up for them as he was aware of the difficulty of staff in lower hierarchical positions in getting their concerns heard. He could not stand the bullying that the nursing staff were experiencing, which was affecting their well-being. In other examples, participants spoke up because they wanted to ensure patients' enquiries were addressed. They wanted to look at things from their customers' perspectives as that influences the organisation's reputation.

***Shifting between categories***

While these four behaviours may appear to be individual categories, there was evidence to show that employees shift their behaviour from remaining silent to speaking up and vice versa for both the UK and Malaysia participants. It was evident in the following quote that there is a shift from pro-self silence to pro-self voice:

*"I try to keep it a secret because I didn't want anyone to know because I was so ashamed. I didn't tell anyone but then I suffered a really serious health affair."* (P25UK)

In this incident, the participant finally decided to speak up as it was impacting on her well-being. The negative impact to self was perceived to be higher when remaining silent about the concern than the impact of speaking up about an issue that the participant felt ashamed about. Hence, the participant decided to speak up.

There was also evidence of a shift in behaviour in the following quote, but from pro-self voice to pro-self silence:

*"…there's no point of you saying anything because we're not going to win this argument. So then I chose not to say anything…"* (P21UK)

In this instance, the participant felt that the ongoing battle to fight for a change in the way things are was not worth the negative impact on his well-being. Therefore, he decided to remain silent for pro-self reasons. These two quotes provide insights into the behavioural shift depending on the consequences to self.

Outcome of behaviour

This theme is connected to the previous one. People engage in silence and voice with certain expectations of the outcome of their behaviour. Participants described the two sub-themes of actual outcome (i.e. degree of change) and outcome expectation as affecting their well-being to various degrees.

***Actual outcome***

This sub-theme relates to the actual outcome that follows participants' silence or voice behaviours. The situation has either changed for the better, changed for the worse, or remained the same. A few participants provided examples of changes that took place after raising their concerns. They expressed feeling a sense of accomplishment that the management implemented the improvements. For P05MY, she felt heard when the management addressed her concern about the company's strategies that she thought was not well developed. Whilst being able to speak up was in itself important, the sense of "feeling heard" came from the material changes that followed; this made her feel respected and valued in the organisation, which she perceived to improve her overall well-being.

Meanwhile, for some participants, changes were shortlived, while others did not experience changes after engaging in voice behaviours. P02UK, who has been speaking up for years, started engaging in silence due to her frustration after not observing any changes. The silence was because she "just knew" it wasn't getting her anywhere. She described her experience of speaking up during a staff meeting to request the management to take early years teachers' concerns seriously. The management acknowledged her during the meeting, and she appreciated the gesture. However, this was a one-off incident. She went on to say, *"And then the next staff meeting it went back to normal."* This demonstrates that 'being heard' in the literal sense of having audibly spoken to an audience that listened, might have short term emotional benefits, but where material change is not forthcoming, the benefits are eroded.

Indeed, some participants described the continual engagement in voice as comparable to being in a battle due to not experiencing improvements; the emotional toll of continually speaking out only to find no change forthcoming was felt to be emotionally draining and had a

negative impact on well-being. For several participants, the changes that followed voice behaviours were changes for the worse. Some participants who raised their concerns ended up either resigning or were terminated from their employment. These participants were expected to remain silent but were not prepared to do so, or were accused of making false allegations. The participants in this situation described their psychological well-being as negatively impacted leading to severe physical symptoms, with incidences of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal attempts being discussed in the next section that addresses Research Question 2 (part b).

***Outcome Expectation***

The participants in this study outlined a variety of experiences in relation to outcomes, ranging from positive outcomes that they had expected, preparing themselves for negative outcomes and then the impact of unexpectedly negative outcomes. Out of all the scenarios, participants indicated that their well-being is affected negatively in situations where there are unexpected negative outcomes.

When participants experienced positive outcomes that they had expected, they generally do not relate the experiences as having either a positive or negative effect on their well-being. Some participants experienced mixed feelings. P28UK described how she expected the dismissal of the Chief Executive for not acting on her concerns regarding the Financial Director not paying contracters for completed work. The Chief Executive doubted her by making a comparison between her two-month organisational tenure and the Financial Director's five years of experience on his job. Although she felt guilty that he "lost his job" since it was not directly the Chief Executive's fault, she said it was what she "expected to happen". She described feeling sad about the Chief Executive being dismissed since he was a nice person. However, overall, she was glad that the incident was dealt with fairly and that the non-Executive Directors sensed that she had concerns about this issue during the board meeting, which allowed space for her to raise her concerns. She considers failing to act on concerns as serious. Therefore, she perceives that the dismissal was well-justified. This is an example where participants experienced mixed feelings and did not relate the experience to specific impact on their well-being.

Participants also described how they could mitigate against a negative impact on their well-being by preparing for the outcomes. For instance, P11UK expected a negative outcome when she would speak up to a particular person at a management level, so prepared herself with the means to deal with a difficult conversation to ensure her well-being is not affected negatively. She shared:

*"I know in advance like I'm gonna have a bad reaction from them and I'm gonna have to deal with it so it's kinda, putting on your game face and just staying very calm while they're they're responding and just giving them nothing to to fight back against because as soon as you res…react to what they say to you, which is designed to make you react, then they're gonna be off and then it gets, it spirals and it gets quite horrible quite quickly […] I think it's one of those things we only gain with a lot of experience to go through the horrible conversation where you can just kind of, you go cold and you let them say what they're gonna say, you do your best not to respond, and then eventually they kind of blow their way back out of their own sails. But uhm, it's never pleasant."*

Several participants experienced unpleasant exchanges when they spoke up about their concerns which affected their well-being. P04MY described her experience as "harrowing" as she "wasn't expecting that kind of response" while P03UK said the "switch of personality" from "calm and collected" to "vicious" shook him. P24UK, who spoke up about his concern to his line manager, shared this:

*"Instead of telling me nicely, [my line manager] suddenly became nasty. He started sending rude email. He started bullying me. He started undermining me. He started removing me from major decision making."*

The participant had an expectation of how his line manager should have responded, which is in a pleasant manner. The sudden switch in personality came as a shock to him, which was different to what he thought would happen. Participants described the unexpected nature of these adverse reactions as having a particularly negative effect on their well-being.

### 4.5 Themes that address Research Question 2 (Part b)

It became evident during the process of data analysis that the decision to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern could lead to a variety of different well-being outcomes. The themes identified in this section are developed based on participants' descriptions of the psychological impact of silence or voice on their well-being. Sense of self and sense of belonging are linked to the elements found within the concept of psychological well-being as described in Chapter 2.

**Table 4.4 Well-being related outcomes as a result of silence and voice**

| Main themes | Sub-themes | Descriptors |
|---|---|---|
| Sense of self | Sense of control | Hopelessness<br>Morale |
| | Sense of achievement | Capability |
| | Self-worth | Presence<br>Insignificance |
| | Sense of purpose | Purpose at work<br>Purpose in life |
| Sense of belonging | Organisational engagement | Interpersonal relationship<br>Personal vs organisational values<br>Intention to stay |

Sense of self

This theme relates to the effects that the outcome of remaining silent and speaking up had on participants' perceptions about themselves. Participants provided examples of how their silence and voice behaviours influenced their sense of self. The sub-themes are sense of control, sense of achievement, self-worth, and sense of purpose.

***Sense of control***

For many participants, the lack of control in making changes and feeling undermined led them to feel weak and powerless. For P31UK, he described the feeling of "hopelessness" when the management turned his concern about patient safety around to save their reputation and labelled him as the "troublemaker":

*"So, you know one thing that I can't quite find the words for this but when you find yourself in the middle of uhm a mesh of lies, particularly if it's about you, uhm it's very complex uh reaction you're finding yourself. It's not just that you feel frustrated and angry and sad and depressed and frightened, it's not just, it's every…it's the whole thing and I I can't explain it really. It is, it's a horrible thing. And the worst thing is uhm it easily sinks into hopelessness because you think, I'm never gonna get out of this, there's no way out, there's no way out of it. Anyway, they sacked me so that was the way out."*

The feeling of not being able to control either his own destiny or others' actions in tarnishing his image made him feel helpless and trapped. He also illustrated how this feeling of not being in control of the situation was akin to having something very important to him being taken away:

*"If somebody tells a lie about you, it's theft, they're stealing your reputation. Everything comes down to theft really in the end uhm in in my position, I feel that so much was stolen from me that was mine by right uhm and that just it leaves you, ya know just as someone's broken into your house or even taken your children, kidnapped your children, whatever it is."*

Similarly, a participant who is an Assistant Professor in a private university described how she stopped raising concerns and contributing beyond her scope of responsibility after not seeing any changes since the leadership team has a fixed idea of how things should be. As she illustrates:

*"…but it is not uhm you know, same tune with upper management so you have tried one time, second time, third time, so the fourth time you wouldn't want to, you know, give in more opinion or contribute more or do extra mile, because you would…I mean I will slowly feel that uhm that contribution is not being appreciated."* (P18MY)

The shift from voice to silent behaviour was due to no change observed as a result of voice. She expressed that the upper management will only implement changes when the concerns she raises are in line with their thoughts. She added that it defeats the purpose of the upper management asking them to speak up about their concerns, which led to fatigue over time. The sense of not being able to control the outcome and inability to effect change after many attempts influenced participant's well-being.

In another situation, P28UK, who was stripped off her Human Resources Director position overnight, illustrated the severe impact on her morale after she found out what the top management had done as a result of her speaking up about a concern regarding patient safety, which negatively affected not just her psychological well-being but also physical well-being:

*"…I was coming home uhm once I'd put the kids to bed, I will start crying, uhm shaking, uh being physically sick before I went into work the next day. Uh feeling so undermined because uh where I'd been there as a Director…"*

On the other hand, P15MY described feeling 'powerful' as he was given full autonomy from his line manager. As his line manager owns the company, he was given control over all the resources. He could make decisions on how he wants to fix errors for the projects that he was leading. It felt like reassurance from his line manager that he was a valued employee within the organisation. This highlights the very different impacts that outcomes of voice can have on an individual's sense of control, which is an indicator of their well-being.

***Sense of achievement***

Participants expressed feeling "useless", "inadequate" and "incompetent" due to not being heard when they spoke up about their task-related concerns. As P29UK described:

*"those circumstance of raising a concern where I'm trying, they're [upper management] not getting it so I just end up stopping and remaining silent uhm for that reason […] it made me more silent, it kinda kept that that uhm that silencing, it kind of normalised it almost uhm yea I didn't have a voice, didn't have anyone to speak to and then that became the norm uhm and I think it…it had a big impact on my kind of productivity or at least my perception of my productivity uhm I was kind of thinking I'm meant to, my role is to kind of push equality at the university but I'm not able to do that because I don't have a voice, I can't speak that, I can't do my job without having a voice. Uhm so yea it made me feel like like I was being very unproductive and not achieving anything uhm that I should be doing as part of my job role."*

The participant felt that the continual silencing prevented him from meeting the requirements of his job. It affected his well-being because he could not fulfill his role that requires advocating for equality through speaking up about his concerns about equality in his workplace.

Similarly, P32UK said that he wasn't growing professionally since the management did not implement changes after speaking up about a person-related concern. He could not carry out his role and reach his full potential in delivering his project to the best of his ability, which affected his well-being. He said: *"It impacted my morale uhm I'd say my well-being and just to a certain extent my ability to deliver my project in a robust and appropriate manner."*

In contrast, when participants were given the support after raising a serious task-related issue of concern, they feel "a sense of achievement" as expressed by P19MY. This shows the differential impact that change (or the lack of) as a result of silence and voice can have on well-being.

***Self-worth***

Not feeling heard affected participants' self-worth to the extent that they felt "invisible", "worthless" and "little". Participants also expressed how being "lower in the food chain" made them feel that their concerns were not important. P30UK described this:

*"I was losing confidence. And so, it wasn't, it was, it was disrespectful, it was negative and it didn't, you know, when we're in a situation where we add value, then we're able to grow and do our best. When we're not, when we're undermined, we shrink, and I shrank. I felt, you know days when you feel like you wanna hide, I call that, days that I say I feel little."*

In this example, the participant described the impact of having her voice ignored by her line manager. She recounts the experience of wanting to hide, which indicates a feeling that her presence does not make a difference. The two expressions "shrinking" and "feeling little" suggest thoughts of insignificance that is the consequence of not adding value in her workplace. Hence, she was not able to develop and flourish.

Another participant, P25UK, who finally spoke up about her colleague sexually assaulting her, was blamed by her employer for wanting to have an affair with him since she spoke up only at a much later stage. Not having the support and the trust of her employer made her feel worthless to the extent where she wanted to take her own life. She shared:

*"I wanted it to be dealt with officially and I then endured an eleven month grievance procedure at work where I was called a liar, I was told I had an affair with a man and I was trying to ruin his reputation, and they let him continue to work throughout the investigation while I was off sick and I couldn't work because I was suffering from post-traumatic stress and anxiety and insomnia, I just was a mess […] it drove me to the point of attempting suicide."*

The participant expressed the differential treatment that the management gave to her perpetrator and her lack of control in changing the narrative that they have made up about her being untruthful. She described not feeling heard and being defamed as affecting her sense of self by tarnishing her reputation. The damaging consequences as a result of voice affected her well-being severely. She felt at that time that the suffering could only end if she ended her life.

***Sense of purpose***

Participants who experienced a change as a result of speaking up reported that they "felt heard" and as a consequence their well-being improved. This was the case for P05MY who

felt that she fulfilled her role in the company knowing that her voice matters. Meanwhile, participants who experienced no change, or a deterioration as a result of voice behaviours, reported that this affected their sense of purpose. Participants shared that they questioned if their job mattered in the bigger scheme of things since the negativity they felt at work had started to affect their family life. Some reported that they stopped believing in what they were doing. P31UK, who dedicated his life to being a paediatrician said this:

*"all my life I loved uh being a children's doctor, just love every day of it but at that time, uhm I didn't like doing that job anymore."*

This example shows that the impact of experiencing a deterioration after speaking up about workplace issues of concern can result in drastic changes to a person's sense of purpose. It changes a person's attitude towards their work, making it seem meaningless to them and their life, which affects their well-being negatively.

Sense of belonging

This theme describes the influence that remaining silent or speaking up had on participants' perceptions of how included they are in their workplaces, which influenced their level of engagement. Participants provided examples of the psychological impact of feeling engaged with the organisation on their well-being.

***Organisational engagement***

Some participants experienced better relationships with their management and colleagues after speaking up about their concerns. They described how it improved their engagement with the organisation and their well-being. This was the case for P08MY, who realised that she was not the only one who had the problem after speaking up about her concern to her CEO. By speaking up, her colleagues also did not have to "live in isolation" and "suffer in silence" anymore. This incident improved her relationship with her CEO and colleagues, which increased her engagement with the organisation. However, in some situations, participants felt distant from their colleagues after being dismissed by their management for raising concerns, which affected their well-being negatively. P24UK shared this:

*"I went to commit suicide. I have sepsis. I have severe sepsis because I got diabetes. I was completely stressed. My behaviour changed with everybody. I was very lonely. Nobody came to help me."*

In this example, the participant did not feel that people within the organisation were supportive of him in speaking up about his concern. It led to him feeling disengaged from the people and caused a change in his interpersonal relationship with others. The feeling of isolation affected not only his sense of belonging in the workplace but also in the world, which may explain his attempt to commit suicide.

Some participants expressed how the differences in their personal values and organisational values made them question why they were still in the organisation as they could not connect with the organisational values and the workplace culture. Some participants had left their jobs as it was affecting their morale and well-being. It was the case for P12MY, who could not bring their "authentic self" to work. They were reporting to a line manager who perceives that "there was no such thing as discrimination against trans people". As the participant identifies as being part of the LGBTQ+ community, they are aware of the discrimination that transgender people face. They did not feel listened to since they have more knowledge in this matter compared to their line manager who had only worked in the organisation for two months and does not have expertise in work that are related to social justice. Although they spoke up about this concern to their management, they did not receive the expected support. Since the organisation works on social justice, they felt that the organisation was not living its values. They believe that everyone should be acknowledged and respected, which the organisation failed to do. Therefore, they did not find meaning in being in the organisation, which led to their resignation.

The differences in personal and organisational values affected the participants' engagement due to their expectation that the organisation should embrace its values. In this example, the organisation not living its values led to the participant's disengagement from the organisation.

Some participants who experienced poor interpersonal relationship with their line manager as a result of silence and voice about workplace issues of concern, and a difference between their personal values and organisational values have expressed that they have decided that their current workplace was not a place they would work for in the long term. There were examples of how remaining silent affected the well-being of participants negatively, which led to thoughts of leaving the organisation. As P09UK expressed:

*"…there'll, there'll come a time when […] I can't keep […] can't keep quiet about, that I won't be able to keep quiet about and then it will come to…probably a situation where I leave […] it's quite stressful."*

The participant expressed the gradual impact that remaining silent is having on her well-being. She predicts that the pressure and frustration of remaining silent as a result of not being listened to after speaking up will reach a point where she will need to make a decision on whether to stay or leave the organisation. The decision to stay suggests sacrificing her well-being while leaving the organisation would mean losing her job and financial stability. Her choice to stay in the organisation is determined by the threshold of her well-being.

### 4.6 Analysis Summary

It was apparent from all the experiences that remaining silent and speaking up are conscious efforts requiring a significant amount of time in evaluating the behavioural response to take in relation to the workplace issues of concern faced. The evaluation process involved reflecting on personal identity, beliefs, and values. Values and beliefs are core aspects of personal identity formed through socialisation. The socialisation process includes cultural influence, upbringing, and personal experiences that influences the choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern. However, these silence and voice preferences develop as new experiences and knowledge are gained throughout adulthood. The inclination towards silence and voice can shift based on new knowledge acquired due to interpersonal exchanges in the workplace. The process of unlearning was evident in how the change or a lack of change within the organisation prompted a reevaluation in the behavioural response initially engaged. While there is a general perception that people from Malaysia engage in silence due to cultural reasons and people from the UK engage in voice about workplace issues of concern, the data has shown that the participants from both countries do behave outside cultural norms.

For both the UK and Malaysia, person-related issues were considered more challenging to raise compared to task-related issues. Reasons given were around the subjectivity of person-related issues. There were concerns on how a misinterpretation could occur if the person in question interprets the concern as a personal attack and responds negatively. Participants shared that organisations do not have proper (or any) systems to ease speaking up about person-related workplace issues of concern. In these instances, supervisor and organisational support were crucial in ensuring the concerns were dealt with fairly and effectively if at all addressed. When the support was perceived as minimal or absent, remaining silent was generally employed due to fear of negative consequences.

The reason for engaging in silence or voice behaviours and the expectation of the outcome was described as having an impact on psychological well-being. It was interesting to note that silence and voice behaviours were used as coping mechanisms. Voice behaviours that gave rise to feelings of injustice and low self-worth due to persistent pushbacks led to silent

behaviours. Similarly, initial engagement in silence that amounted to poor mental health and frustration due to suppressing feelings of dissatisfaction led to voice behaviours to express pent up thoughts and emotions. These behavioural shifts will be discussed further in the discussion chapter (Chapter 7) as part of the two newly proposed phenomena known as *voice fatigue* and *silence distress* to consider the effects of silence and voice on employee psychological well-being. When the supervisor and organisational support were accessible, there is the feeling of being heard, valued, and respected, which led to feelings of competence and improved productivity. In essence, the outcome of the behavioural response played a crucial role in determining the impact on individuals. On both occasions where participants in the UK and Malaysia remained silent or spoke up about workplace issues of concern, this influenced their psychological well-being.

These findings were used as the basis for developing the rationale and objectives for the next sequence of the research, which is the quantitative study presented in Chapter 5. The literature review combined with the findings from the present study, was used to develop the hypotheses for the quantitative study. The findings from this study were also subsequently used as the basis for developing an online questionnaire (including existing measures and bespoke questions) that is used to test the hypotheses presented in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5

## Study 2: Online Questionnaire

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the detailed methods and results of Study 2. I gathered data through an online questionnaire that was distributed to employees in the UK and Malaysia. The findings from Study 1 were used to identify existing scales in the literature that would be appropriate for quantifying the experiences. For themes that were not covered by existing scales, I developed new scales to fill the gaps. For this study, the aim is to generalise findings from the thematic analysis to the UK and Malaysia population. The statistical analyses are conducted to test the hypotheses developed from the second research question:

*How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia?*

There are five main statistical analysis sections to this chapter (sections 5.3 – 5.7). The hypotheses are tested in sections 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.7. The following eight hypotheses were developed from the findings of Study 1 and the literature review:

1. Effects of Change: Independent Samples *t*-test

   The theme 'Outcome of behaviour' provided evidence to indicate the importance of change when raising workplace issues of concern. From the literature review on the definitions of silence and voice, it was apparent that change or specifically improvement was the central purpose of speaking up about workplace issues of concern. The impact of withholding and expressing workplace issues of concern on psychological well-being surfaced when discussing the possible relationship between change and all the elements that form the concept of psychological well-being. Achieving improvements as a result of voice suggests a positive impact on psychological well-being whereas the withholding of concern suggests a negative impact on psychological well-being. Researchers have also suggested the possible benefits of speaking up in itself on employee psychological well-being. Therefore, voice without improvement is also said to have a positive impact on psychological well-being. As voice has been reported in the literature to be negatively related to turnover intention, voice is predicted to reflect less intention of leaving the organisation. With that, I put forward the following hypotheses:

**$H_1$**: The mean score for psychological well-being when there is improvement as a result of voice is higher than when there is no change as a result of silence.

**$H_2$**: The mean score for psychological well-being when there is no change as a result of voice is higher than when there is no change as a result of silence.

**$H_3$**: The mean score for turnover intention when there is improvement as a result of voice is lower than when there is no change as a result of silence.

**$H_4$**: The mean score for turnover intention when there is no change as a result of voice is lower than when there is no change as a result of silence.

2. Silence and Voice Orientation: Independent Samples *t*-test

   From the theme 'Reason for behaviour', the interview data suggests that the various orientations occur for each country. It was not evident if there was a specific behavioural preference for the UK and Malaysia. However, studies have indicated that cultures that have the dominant cultural profile of vertical collectivism are less likely to challenge people with higher power status and are more other-oriented. This indicates that employees in Malaysia would be more likely to withhold workplace issues of concern to benefit others or the organisation based on altruism and cooperative motives. On the other hand, cultures that have the dominant cultural profile of horizontal individualism perceive others to be equal to them and are more self-oriented. This suggests that employees in the UK would be more likely to express workplace issues of concern with the intention to benefit self and relieve self from consequences that are perceived to be personally unpleasant. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses:

   **$H_5$**: The mean score for prosocial silence is higher than pro-self silence in Malaysia.

   **$H_6$**: The mean score for pro-self voice is higher than prosocial voice in the UK.

3. Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention: Simple Regression Analysis

   Existing research has shown that people who experience adverse negative effects had higher turnover rates. Further to that, high levels of stress was shown to be positively related to disengagement. The current research has also shown that psychological well-being and turnover intention are related (see theme 'Sense of belonging' in Chapter 4). Therefore, I put forward the following hypothesis:

**$H_7$**: Psychological well-being is negatively related to turnover intention.

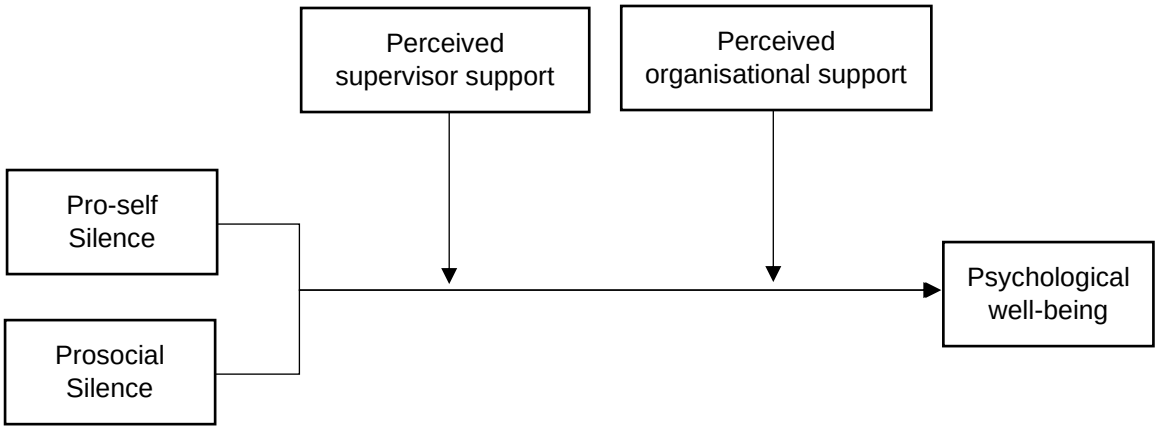
4. Participant Characteristics and Correlates

5. Moderating Effect of Perceived Support: Moderated Regression Analysis

   The findings from Study 1 suggest the interconnectedness between employee silence and voice, supervisor and organisational support, and employee psychological well-being. The literature review into psychological safety, psychological well-being, and the psychological contract suggested the positive relationship between voice behaviour and supervisor and organisational support, and the negative relationship between silence behaviour and supervisor and organisational support. Thus far, studies on employee silence have shown inconclusive findings of the benefits of silence. However, the prevalence of employee silence suggests that there are possible benefits of silence for employees from both Western (individualists) and Eastern (collectivists) countries. Hence, to challenge the assumption that silence is 'bad', I propose that there are benefits of silence to psychological well-being for employees in the UK and Malaysia when taking into consideration low supervisor and organisational support.

   **$H_8$**: Perceived support (supervisor; organisational) will moderate the relationship between silence (pro-self; prosocial) and psychological well-being, with employees who perceived lower levels of support displaying higher levels of psychological well-being.

**Figure 5.1 A model of the moderating effect of Perceived Support on the relationship between Silence and Psychological Well-being**




I conducted a series of statistical analyses using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 to examine the differences and associations between the variables for both countries to arrive at the conclusions of the study.

## 5.2 Method

To answer Research Question 2 and achieve the first research objective, an online questionnaire was used to examine how remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia. The sampling and data collection procedure and instrument development process are described in this section.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedure

Purposive sampling was used, and selected measures were presented in the form of an online survey to a sample of employees who fit the following eligibility criteria:

- employees have been in situations where they have remained silent and/or have spoken up about workplace issues of concern,
- are reporting to a line manager, and
- are either a British citizen working in the UK or a Malaysian citizen working in Malaysia under full-time paid employment by an organisation.

For this study, full-time employed staff was used as a criterion as there were differences in experiences with part-time employed staff after conducting the semi-structured interviews. Previous research also noted differences between the worker groups in relation to job strain and work satisfaction (Steffy & Jones, 1990). As this is a sequential study with most interview participants employed on a full-time basis except one that was employed on a part-time basis, I decided to sample only people who are employed on a full-time basis for this study. This also helps to reduce the effects of confounding variables on the relationships to be tested in the hypothesised models. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling and advertisement texts posted on social media platforms and participant recruitment sites. The online survey was designed and hosted on onlinesurveys.ac.uk, previously known as Bristol Online Surveys (BOS). The Online Survey platform covers all aspects of data storage, protection and encryption. The survey link was included in written advertisements and posted on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Survey Circle. As this method of recruitment only yielded 57 participants (15 from the UK and 42 from Malaysia) after three months the survey was launched, to speed up the recruitment process, I posted the survey on prolific.co to recruit UK participants, which is a paid service for a minimal fee for every participant who completes the survey. For Malaysia, I engaged Splendid Research for their similar paid service to recruit the additional participants required.

As factor analyses were conducted to test the validity of the latent constructs for the Employee Voice scale that I developed and the existing Employee Silence scale that I used, the sample

size calculation took into consideration the number of items and factors in the scales to determine the sample size. For a study with 6 to 8 variables and two factors, the recommended sample size is 60 and the ratio is between 7 to 10 times as many cases as the variables to provide sufficient power (Mundfrom, Shaw, & Ke, 2005).

The dataset was examined for unengaged responses, illogical answers, and missing data. Participants were removed from the dataset in these identified cases. There are three patterns indicative of unengaged responses:

1. Speeding: Participants completed the survey in less than three minutes,
2. Flatlining: Participants consistently entered similar values across different variables. For example, '1, 1, 1, 1,…' or '2, 2, 2, 2, 6, 6, 6, 2, 2, 2,…'
3. Inattentiveness: Participants answered reverse-coded questions in a similar direction to non reverse-coded questions. For example, if participants responded *strongly agree* to "My supervisor cares about my opinions", "My supervisor really cares about my well-being", and "My supervisor shows very little concern for me" (reverse-coded).

Participants who provided illogical answers were also removed, such as entering '1008' for a free text question, "How many hours are you employed to work a week as stated on your contract?". As there were only two UK responses with missing data, I executed listwise deletion by excluding the two participants from the analyses. Listwise deletion is recommended to ensure consistent estimates across values during analyses (Field, 2018). The final sample size is 340 (see Table 5.1 for more details). As the selection of the Employee Silence Scale (6 items) and the development of the Employee Voice Scale (8 items) were based on the combined descriptors identified from the thematic analysis for both countries conducted in Study 1, the factor analyses take into consideration the combined sample sizes of both countries for each type of experience.

**Table 5.1 Sample size by country and type of experience**

| | UK | MY | Total (*n*) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Employee Silence | 102 | 62 | 164 |
| Employee Voice | 80 | 96 | 176 |

The individual and combined sample sizes satisfy the minimum needed for a factor analysis with a combined sample size ratio of over 27 cases per variable for the Employee Silence Scale and a combined sample size ratio of 22 cases per variable for the Employee Voice Scale.

Participant Characteristics

The following tables and figures describe the characteristics of the participants who completed the online questionnaire:

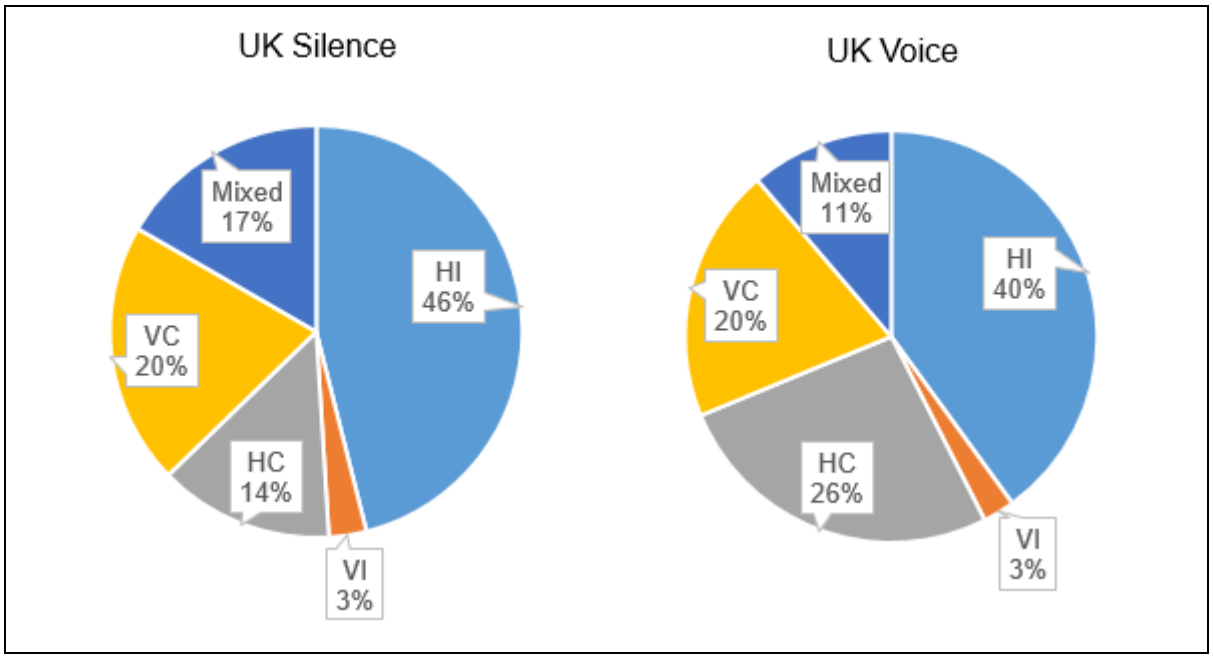
**Table 5.2 Participants' demographic characteristics**

| | United Kingdom | | Malaysia | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Silence N (%) | Voice N (%) | Silence N (%) | Voice N (%) |
| Total samples | 102 | 80 | 62 | 96 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 54 (52.9) | 41 (51.3) | 38 (61.3) | 45 (46.9) |
| Female | 48 (47.1) | 39 (48.7) | 24 (38.7) | 51 (53.1) |
| Age | | | | |
| ≤ 29 | 34 (33.3) | 25 (31.3) | 22 (35.5) | 22 (22.9) |
| 30 – 39 | 38 (37.3) | 25 (31.3) | 28 (45.2) | 48 (50.0) |
| ≥ 40 | 30 (29.4) | 30 (37.5) | 12 (19.4) | 26 (27.1) |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| British – Arab | 2 | 1 | | |
| British – Asian | 6 | 1 | | |
| British – Black/African/Caribbean | 2 | 0 | | |
| British – Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups | 1 | 0 | | |
| British – Other | 0 | 1 | | |
| British – White | 91 | 77 | | |
| Malaysian – Bumiputra | | | 7 | 8 |
| Malaysian – Chinese | | | 34 | 42 |
| Malaysian – Indian | | | 1 | 6 |
| Malaysian – Malay | | | 16 | 36 |
| Malaysian – Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups | | | 4 | 2 |
| Malaysian – Other | | | 0 | 1 |
| Sexual Orientation | | | | |
| Heterosexual or straight | 86 | 71 | 57 | 90 |
| Bisexual | 7 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| Homosexual or gay | 7 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

**Table 5.3 Participants' organisational characteristics and work experience**

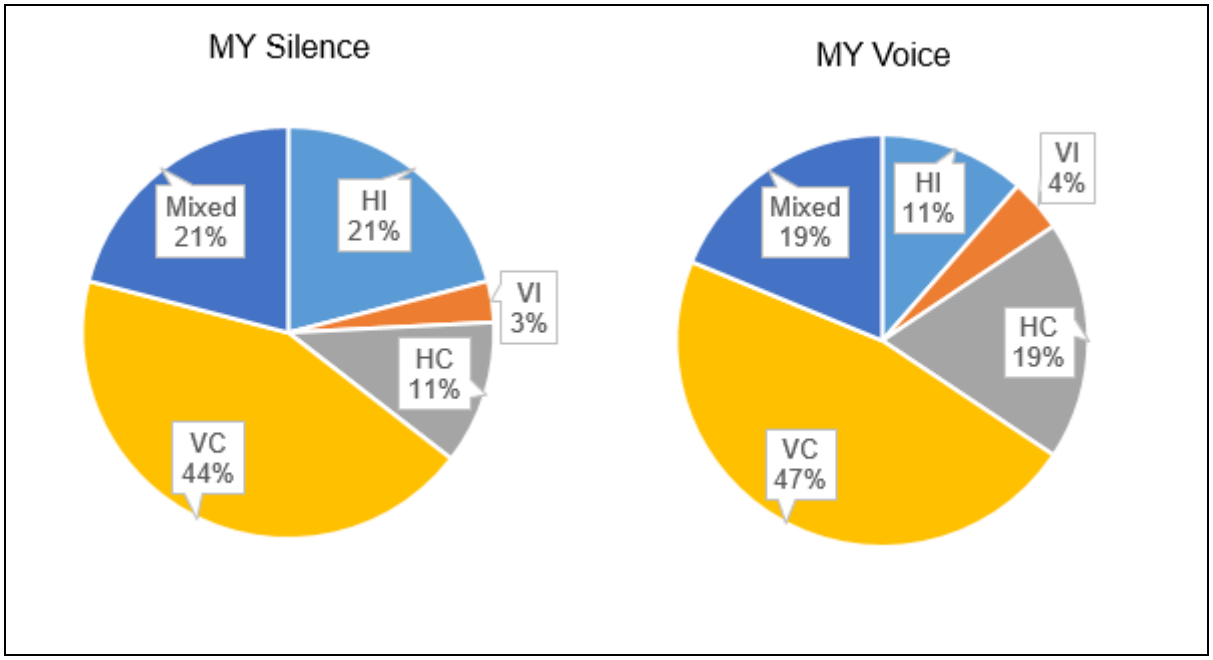
| | United Kingdom | | Malaysia | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Silence N (%) | Voice N (%) | Silence N (%) | Voice N (%) |
| Total samples | 102 | 80 | 62 | 96 |
| Sector | | | | |
| Private | 65 (63.7) | 46 (57.5) | 47 (75.8) | 78 (81.3) |
| Public | 26 (25.5) | 19 (23.8) | 3 (4.8) | 13 (13.5) |
| Public-private | 7 (7.8) | 5 (6.3) | 9 (14.5) | 4 (4.2) |
| Non-governmental | 3 (2.9) | 10 (12.5) | 3 (4.8) | 1 (1.0) |
| Other | 1 (1.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) | 0 (0.0) |
| Organisational Size | | | | |
| Micro (0 - 9) | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Small (10 - 49) | 18 | 9 | 9 | 15 |
| Medium (50 - 249) | 12 | 17 | 20 | 28 |
| Large (250 - 999) | 26 | 13 | 16 | 17 |
| Very Large (1000 and more) | 42 | 37 | 12 | 32 |
| First job | | | | |
| Yes | 18 (17.6) | 11 (13.8) | 14 (22.6) | 27 (28.1) |
| No | 84 (82.4) | 69 (86.3) | 48 (77.4) | 69 (71.9) |

**Figure 5.2 Participants' cultural orientation in the UK**




*Note:* HI – Horizontal Individualism, VI – Vertical Individualism, HC – Horizontal Collectivism, VC – Vertical Collectivism, Mixed – A combination of two or more orientations

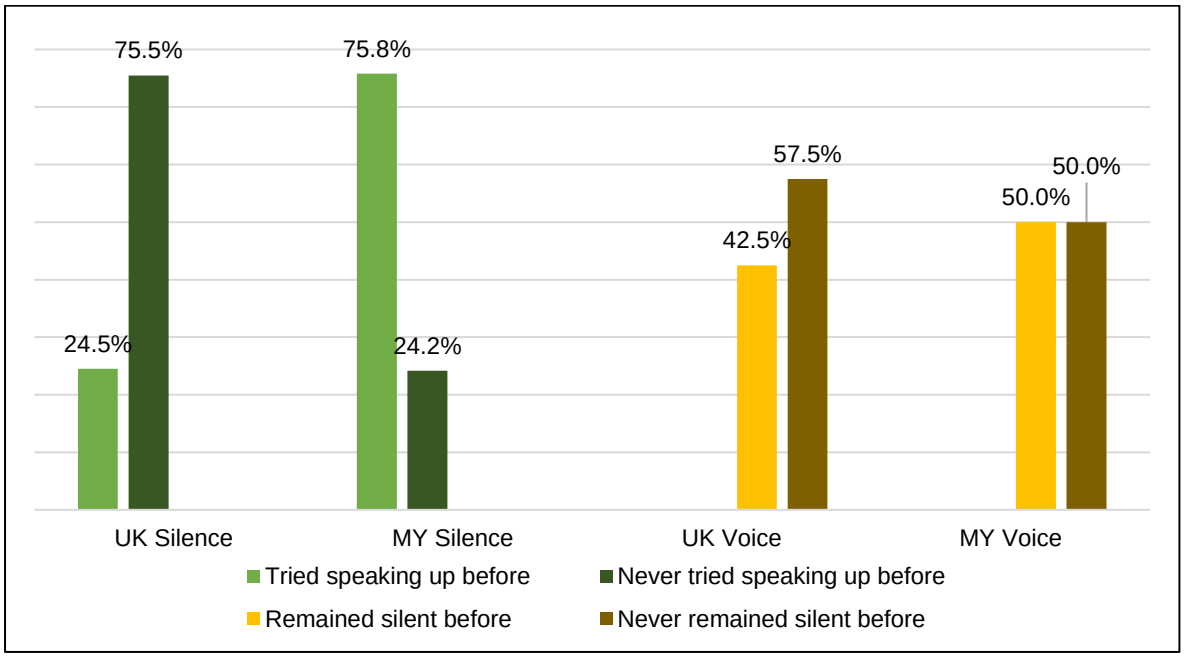
**Figure 5.3 Participants' cultural orientation in Malaysia**




*Note:* HI – Horizontal Individualism, VI – Vertical Individualism, HC – Horizontal Collectivism, VC – Vertical Collectivism, Mixed – A combination of two or more orientations

Participants' cultural orientation in each country are in line with the cultural dimension index commonly reported (see Harris, Rettie, & Cheung, 2005; Sumaco, Imrie, & Hussain, 2014). 43% of participants in the UK have a cultural orientation of Horizontal Individualism and 46% of participants in Malaysia have a cultural orientation of Vertical Collectivism.

**Figure 5.4 Experience before remaining silent or speaking up about concern (%)**



Of those who completed the questionnaire on their silence experience, UK participants are three times more likely than Malaysians to have never spoken up about their concerns. On the other hand, Malaysian participants are three times more likely than UK participants to have spoken up about their concerns before remaining silent. This pattern of behaviours is not reflective of the cultural norms of the UK and Malaysia, but it is not clear what has led to this finding.

Instrument Development

Based on the themes identified in Study 1, I used a combination of existing scales and scales that I developed to measure the variables derived from those themes. The following are the variables mapped onto the themes identified:

**Table 5.4 Key Variables/Scales in the online questionnaire**

| Main themes | Sub-themes | Variables/Scales |
|---|---|---|
| Socialisation | Culture | • Cultural Orientation/ Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Scale (Triandis & Gelfland, 1998)<br>• Choice<br>• Self-voice Behaviour (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998)<br>• Behavioural Preference |
| | Upbringing | |
| | Personal experiences | |
| Type of issue | Task-related | • Type of Issue*<br>• Importance of Issue<br>• Degree of Directness* |
| | Person-related | |
| Support for voice | Supervisor support | Perceived Supervisor Support (Rhoades et al., 2001) |
| | Organisational support | Perceived Organisational Support (Rhoades et al., 2001) |
| Reason for behaviour | Pro-self and prosocial silence | Silence Orientation/ Employee Silence Scale (Knoll & van Dick, 2013) |
| | Pro-self and prosocial voice | Voice Orientation/ Employee Voice Scale |
| Outcome of behaviour | Change | Change* |
| | Outcome expectation | Outcome expectation |
| Sense of self | Sense of control, Sense of achievement, Self-worth, Sense of purpose | • Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010)<br>• Turnover Intention (TIS-6) (Bothma & Roodt, 2013) |
| Sense of belonging | Organisational engagement | |

*Note:* Scales without citations were developed by the researcher based on descriptors of the themes identified. *Categorical variables.

Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire (see Appendix 4) included the variables and scales presented in Table 5.4 in addition to questions related to participants' demographics, organisational characteristics, and work experience. Participants responded to survey items mainly on 5-point Likert-type scales or 7-point Likert type scales. For scales with more than one item, scale scores were obtained through summation of all items. The survey was estimated to take 15 minutes to complete.

After requesting for participants to complete the demographic questions, the first two sections involved completing a series of questions around participant's silence *or* voice experience, and their well-being. Respondents were given the following paragraph to reflect on before moving forward with the questionnaire:

*In completing the questionnaire, think of an issue that you were most concerned about in your current job. This was an issue that you either remained silent or spoke up about to your supervisor or management. If this is an issue that you have both remained silent and spoken up about, think of the most recent action that you took.*

Participants were then asked to indicate their role and their line manager's role in the organisation. This was followed by presenting the following three questions before directing participants to the relevant questions depending on whether they would be completing the 'Silence Experience' questionnaire or the 'Voice Experience' questionnaire.

**Perceived Supervisor Support** Perceived supervisor support is measured using four items with a scale from 1 (*Strongly agree*) to 7 (*Strongly disagree*). Sample items are "My supervisor cares about my opinions", "My supervisor shows very little concern for me" (reverse-coded). The reverse-coded item is recoded in the opposite direction before summation of the scale score, for example, 1 is recoded as 7, and 3 is recoded as 5.

**Perceived Organisational Support** Perceived organisational support is measured using similar items to the perceived supervisor support scale with the word 'supervisor' being replaced with 'organisation'.

**Behavioural Preference** Behavioural preference is used to gauge participants' general silence or voice preference in their workplace. It was measured using a single item on a scale of 1 (*I only remain silent*) to 7 (*I only speak up*).

The following are summaries of the measures for the Silence Experience questionnaire:

**Choice** The Choice scale is measured using a single item from 1 (*It was not my choice*) to 7 (*It was entirely my choice*). This item follows the question on whether participants have tried speaking up about the issue before remaining silent about it. It measures the extent to which remaining silent was participant's choice.

**Importance of Issue** This scale measures the level of importance of the issue to the participant. It was measured using a single item from 1 (*of very little or no importance*) to 5 (*of utmost importance to me*).

**Employee Silence Scale** Participants are presented with the item root "I remained silent at work…" followed by three items for each of the two forms of employee silence. Sample items are "…because of fear of negative consequences" (pro-self silence), "…because I did not want to hurt the feelings of colleagues or superiors" (prosocial silence). Participants are asked to respond to the three items on 7-point Likert-type scales from 1 (*does not apply to me at all*) to 7 (*applies to me entirely*).

**Outcome Expectation** This scale is measured using a single item on a scale from 1 (*Did not expect this*) to 7 (*Fully expected this*). The item measures the extent to which participants expected the outcome of their silence behaviour for either of the response categories indicated "It made things better", "It made things worse" under the ***Change*** question that asked participants about their perception of the impact of remaining silent about their workplace issue of concern.

For participants who completed the Voice Experience questionnaire, the measures are similar to the Silence Experience questionnaire with the exception of the Employee Voice Scale. All the other scales and questions are worded to capture their experience of speaking up about their workplace issue of concern.

**Employee Voice Scale** Participants are presented with the item root "I spoke up at work…" followed by four items for each of the two forms of employee voice. Sample items are "…because I wanted to seek justice for myself" (pro-self voice), "…because I wanted to improve the workplace environment" (prosocial voice). Participants are asked to respond to the four items on 7-point Likert-type scales from 1 (*does not apply to me at all*) to 7 (*applies to me entirely*).

Under the well-being section, participants are asked to respond to the following two scales:

**Flourishing Scale** This scale measures the psychological well-being of participants. It is considered comprehensive as it includes the human need to support others in addition to the need of having the support of others. Sample items are “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life”, “My social relationships are supportive and rewarding”, “I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others”, “I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me”. The scale is measured using eight items on 7-point Likert-type scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

**Turnover Intention** Participants are asked to respond to five questions that ascertains the extent to which they intend to stay at their organisation. Participants are presented with an item root “In your current job…” followed by the five questions measured on 5-point Likert-type scales.

In the final section, participants are presented with three scales to measure their general behavioural preference and culture orientation:

**Self-Voice Behaviour** Participants are asked to indicate their general preference for voice on six items measured on 7-point Likert-type scales from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are “I usually speak up and encourage others in my work group to get involved in issues that affect the group”, “I usually communicate my opinions about work issues to others in my group even if my opinion is different and others in the group disagree with me”.

**Culture Orientation Scale** This scale measures participant’s orientation between Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism using 16 items from a scale of 1 (*never or definitely no*) to 9 (*always or definitely yes*). Sample items are “I'd rather depend on myself than others” (Horizontal individualism), “It is important that I do my job better than others” (Vertical individualism), “If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud” (Horizontal collectivism), “Parents and children must stay together as much as possible” (Vertical collectivism).

**Power Distance Scale** Participants are asked to respond to three items on a scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). A sample of an item in the scale is “In order to have efficient work relationships, it is often necessary to bypass hierarchical lines”.

Measures

These main scales have been identified as having high reliability and validity based on previous research conducted:

**Table 5.5 Reliability and validity of measures from the literature**

| No. | Scale name, Author(s) (Year) | Measures: | Reliability/Validity |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Perceived Supervisor Support (Rhoades et al., 2001) | The general beliefs of employees concerning how much their supervisor values their contributions and cares about their well-being. | High loadings of items. Range from 0.80 to 0.86. |
| 2 | Perceived Organisational Support (Rhoades et al., 2001) | The general beliefs of employees concerning how much their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. | High loadings of items. Range from 0.81 to 0.84. |
| 3 | Prosocial Silence and Quiescent Silence (Knoll & van Dick, 2013) | The extent to which employees remain silent to protect others or to protect themselves. | High reliabilities at 0.82 and 0.89 respectively. |
| 4 | Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010) | Psychological well-being. | High reliabilities and high convergent validity with similar more established scales at 0.78 and 0.73, i.e. Ryff (1989). |
| 5 | Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6) (Bothma & Roodt, 2013) | Intention to leave organisation. | Reliability of 0.80. |
| 6 | Voice Behaviour (self) (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) | Self-preference to speak up about issues of concern at work. | Reliability was high with internal consistency at time 1 – 0.88 and time 2 – 0.89. |
| 7 | Culture Orientation / Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Scale (Triandis & Gelfland, 1998) | Individual's tendency towards valuing personal goals over one's in-group goals. | It has been tested in countries that are similar to the UK and Malaysia. Reliability of 0.83 to 0.64 (Györkös et al., 2013) and 0.75 to 0.62 (Soh and Leong, 2002). |
| 8 | Power Distance Scale (Lee et al., 2000) | The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. | Reasonable reliability at 0.72. This scale is used to complement the HVIC scale to further examine the Horizontal and Vertical components (Soh & Leong, 2002). |

The following table presents the reliability of the scales for the two countries based on the data collected from this study:

**Table 5.6 Cronbach alpha for internal reliability of scales for the UK and Malaysia**

| Scale | UK Silence | UK Voice | MY Silence | MY Voice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Supervisor Support | 0.89 | 0.94 | 0.81 | 0.83 |
| Perceived Organisational Support | 0.90 | 0.94 | 0.84 | 0.87 |
| Pro-self Silence | 0.82 | - | 0.69 | - |
| Prosocial Silence | 0.72 | - | 0.78 | - |
| Pro-self Voice | - | 0.80 | - | 0.70 |
| Prosocial Voice | - | 0.71 | - | 0.87 |
| Psychological Well-being | 0.92 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.87 |
| Turnover Intention | 0.79 | 0.87 | 0.77 | 0.77 |
| Self-Voice Behaviour | 0.91 | 0.91 | 0.88 | 0.93 |
| Horizontal Individualism | 0.76 | 0.76 | 0.77 | 0.64 |
| Vertical Individualism | 0.60 | 0.75 | 0.51 | 0.68 |
| Horizontal Collectivism | 0.75 | 0.76 | 0.72 | 0.67 |
| Vertical Collectivism | 0.85 | 0.79 | 0.84 | 0.78 |
| Power Distance | 0.66 | 0.38 | 0.58 | 0.63 |

*Note:* As the Power Distance Scale did not meet the requirements of acceptable reliability of 0.7 (Cronbach, 1951) in all four columns, this scale has not been considered for reporting and analysis.

I developed the Employee Voice scale (7 point Likert scale – strongly agree to strongly disagree) using items from the sub-themes Pro-self Voice and Prosocial Voice to complement the Employee Silence scale that I constructed using two existing scales: Quiescent Silence (Pro-self Silence) and Prosocial Silence from a study conducted by Knoll and van Dick (2013).

The item pool for the employee silence scales (pro-self and prosocial) is comprised of three statements each to complete the item root “I remained silent at work…” (see Table 5.9 for details). The item pool for each type of employee voice (pro-self and prosocial) is comprised of four statements to complete the item root “I spoke up at work…” (see Table 5.12 for details). Table 5.14 consists of the final three items for each type of employee voice after conducting factor analysis. The item pools were included in the online questionnaire (see Appendix 4).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

***Employee silence scale (ESS)***

The 6-item questionnaire in this study was used to measure two elements of employee silence: pro-self silence and prosocial silence. A factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to examine whether the items related to pro-self silence and prosocial silence loaded in an orderly manner on the two factors.

Before conducting EFA, pre-analysis considerations were done to examine the factorability of the 6 ESS items. All items were administered on a seven-point Likert scale and are considered ordinal categorical in nature, which is suitable (Field, 2018). Secondly, in observing the correlation matrix, all 6 items correlated at .32 and above with at least one other item. This suggests good factorability (see Table 5.7). Next, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .68, above the commonly recommended value of .6 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi 2$ (15) = 287.59, $p < .05$).

**Table 5.7 Correlation matrix for the 6 employee silence items**

| | ses1 | ses2 | ses3 | sos1 | sos2 | sos3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ses1 | – | | | | | |
| ses2 | .49 | – | | | | |
| ses3 | .65 | .50 | – | | | |
| sos1 | .18 | .29 | .08 | – | | |
| sos2 | .15 | .18 | .05 | .49 | – | |
| sos3 | .24 | .16 | .03 | .56 | .46 | – |

*Note:* The three items measuring pro-self silence are named 'ses1' to 'ses3' and the three items measuring prosocial silence are named 'sos1' to 'sos3'.

An examination of the scree plot was used as an extraction method and revealed a clear cut-off point. The two factors with eigenvalues >1 are reported here. Initial eigenvalues indicated that the first factor has a total of 2.515 that accounts for 42% of all the variance in the items and the second factor has a total of 1.625 that accounts for 27% of all the variance in the items (see Table 5.8). The two factor solution, which explained 69% of the variance meets previous theoretical support of the constructs and showed 'leveling off' of eigenvalues on the scree plot after two factors. Factor loadings for each item after conducting varimax rotation are shown in Table 5.9. Each set of questionnaire items load substantially on one factor, with one set loading on the first factor and another set loading on the second factor.

**Table 5.8 Total variance explained for the employee silence scale**

| Factors | Initial Eigenvalues | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 2.515 | 41.923 | 41.923 |
| 2 | 1.625 | 27.087 | 69.010 |
| 3 | .597 | 9.947 | 78.958 |
| 4 | .557 | 9.283 | 88.241 |
| 5 | .400 | 6.674 | 94.915 |
| 6 | .305 | 5.085 | 100.000 |

*Note:* Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood

Varimax rotation revealed three items loaded onto the pro-self silence factor (ranging from .60 to .86) and prosocial silence consisted of three items (ranging from .62 to .77). The factor loadings fall into the range that are considered good and excellent (Comrey and Lee, 1992).

**Table 5.9 Factor loadings after varimax rotation for employee silence items**

| Items | | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pro-self | Prosocial |
| I remained silent at work… | | Silence | Silence |
| ses1 | because of fear of negative consequences | .765 | |
| ses2 | because I did not want to feel vulnerable in the face of colleagues or superiors | .598 | |
| ses3 | because I fear disadvantages from speaking up | .860 | |
| sos1 | because I did not want to embarrass others | | .767 |
| sos2 | because I did not want to hurt the feelings of colleagues or superiors | | .624 |
| sos3 | because I did not want others to get into trouble | | .716 |

As the factor analytic results are satisfactory, reliability analysis is conducted to assess the internal reliability of each measurement scale (Dewberry, 2004) using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Results showed that both measures met the minimum level acceptable coefficient alpha of .70 with an alpha of .78 for pro-self silence and .75 for prosocial silence.

***Employee voice scale (EVS)***

The 8-item questionnaire used in this study was developed based on findings from Study 1 to complement the employee silence scale. The EVS measures two elements of employee voice: pro-self voice and prosocial voice. A factor analysis with varimax rotation was also conducted to examine whether the items related to pro-self voice and prosocial voice loaded in an orderly manner on the two factors.

Pre-analysis considerations were done to examine the factorability of the 8 EVS items. Similar to the ESS, all EVS items were administered on a seven-point Likert scale and are considered ordinal categorical in nature, which is suitable (Field, 2018). Secondly, in observing the correlation matrix, all 8 items correlated at .32 and above with at least one other item. This suggests good factorability (see Table 5.10). Next, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .70, above the commonly recommended value of .6 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi 2$ (28) = 452.97, $p < .05$).

**Table 5.10 Correlation matrix for the 8 employee voice items**

| | sev1 | sev2 | sev3 | sev4 | sov1 | sov2 | sov3 | sov4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| sev1 | – | | | | | | | |
| sev2 | .45 | – | | | | | | |
| sev3 | .57 | .62 | – | | | | | |
| sev4 | .31 | .35 | .33 | – | | | | |
| sov1 | .23 | .13 | .16 | -.05 | – | | | |
| sov2 | .11 | .10 | .07 | .14 | .45 | – | | |
| sov3 | -.16 | -.02 | -.11 | .13 | .21 | .42 | – | |
| sov4 | -.12 | .05 | -.02 | .11 | .41 | .57 | .68 | – |

*Note:* The four items measuring pro-self voice are named 'sev1' to 'sev4' and the four items measuring prosocial voice are named 'sov1' to 'sov4'.

A visual inspection of the scree plot revealed a cut-off point between points 2 and 3. This initial inspection suggests a two factor solution. However, the initial eigenvalues report a three factor solution indicating that the first factor has a total of 2.555 that accounts for 32% of all the variance in the items and the second factor has a total of 2.257 that accounts for 28% of all the variance in the items, with the third factor at a total of 1.032 accounting for 13% of all the variance in the items. Table 5.11 presents the initial eigenvalues for the three factors. Although this does not meet previous theoretical support, the initial eigenvalues for the third factor is very close to 1 and is lower by more than half of the first and second initial eigenvalues.

Furthermore, upon examining the factor loadings, item sev4 has a much lower factor loading of .480, which is considered fair, compared to the other three items ranging from .653 to .816, which are considered very good to excellent (Comrey and Lee, 1992). In further examining the sev4 item, 'because I've tried remaining silent and it affected my well-being', a further discussion with two experienced researchers confirmed that this item should be removed as the statement is conditional and would therefore be applicable only to participants who have tried remaining silent before speaking up.

**Table 5.11 Total variance explained for the employee voice scale**

| Factors | Initial Eigenvalues | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 2.555 | 31.940 | 31.940 |
| 2 | 2.257 | 28.206 | 60.146 |
| 3 | 1.032 | 12.901 | 73.048 |
| 4 | .636 | 7.948 | 80.996 |
| 5 | .469 | 5.867 | 86.863 |
| 6 | .439 | 5.490 | 92.353 |
| 7 | .353 | 4.408 | 96.761 |
| 8 | .259 | 3.239 | 100.000 |

*Note:* Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood

**Table 5.12 Factor loadings after varimax rotation for employee voice items**

| Items | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I spoke up at work… | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| sev1 because I wanted to seek justice for myself | .653 | | |
| sev2 because I did not want it to affect me negatively | .731 | | |
| sev3 because I wanted to make things better for myself | .816 | | |
| sev4 because I've tried remaining silent and it affected my well-being | .480 | | |
| sov1 because I wanted to make things better for my colleagues | | | .873 |
| sov2 because I wanted to improve the workplace environment | | .571 | .312 |
| sov3 because I wanted the best for our customers/clients | | .755 | |
| sov4 because I wanted to make things better for the organisation | | .903 | |

When examining the factor loadings for the third factor, item sov2 was found to cross-load onto factors 2 and 3 with good loading observed for factor 2 and poor loading for factor 3.

Table 5.12 presents the factor loadings for the 8 items after conducting varimax rotation. On the basis that composite measures provide more information on the construct, reduce measurement error and increase reliability of findings (DeVellis, 2003), adjustment was made to remove item sov1 and a re-analysis was conducted with items sev1, sev2, sev3, sov2, sov3, and sov4.

In the re-analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .65, above the commonly recommended value of .6 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi 2$ (15) = 346.77, $p < .05$). A visual inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear cut-off point indicating a two factor solution. The first factor has a total of 2.169 that accounts for 36% of all the variance in the items and the second factor has a total of 2.089 that accounts for 35% of all the variance in the items. Table 5.13 presents the initial eigenvalues for the two factors. The constructs demonstrated discriminant validity as each set of questionnaire items load substantially on one factor, with the prosocial voice items loading on the first factor and the pro-self voice items loading on the second factor (see Table 5.14).

**Table 5.13 Total variance explained for the employee voice scale (adjusted)**

| Factors | Initial Eigenvalues | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 2.169 | 36.155 | 36.155 |
| 2 | 2.089 | 34.816 | 70.971 |
| 3 | .643 | 10.723 | 81.694 |
| 4 | .467 | 7.787 | 89.481 |
| 5 | .356 | 5.933 | 95.414 |
| 6 | .275 | 4.586 | 100.000 |

*Note:* Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood

Varimax rotation for the adjusted employee voice items revealed three items loaded onto pro-self voice (ranging from .60 to .96) and prosocial voice consisted of three items (ranging from .66 to .87). The factor loadings fall into the range that are considered good (.55 to .62), very good (.63 to .70), and excellent (.71 and above) (Comrey and Lee, 1992).

As the factor analytic results are satisfactory, reliability analysis is conducted to assess the internal reliability of each measurement scale (Dewberry, 2004) using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Results showed that both measures met the minimum level acceptable coefficient alpha of .70 with an alpha of .77 for pro-self voice and .79 for prosocial voice.

**Table 5.14 Factor loadings after varimax rotation for the employee voice items (adjusted)**

| Items | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| | Prosocial | Pro-self |
| I spoke up at work… | Voice | Voice |
| sev1 because I wanted to seek justice for myself | | .659 |
| sev2 because I did not want it to affect me negatively | | .706 |
| sev3 because I wanted to make things better for myself | | .867 |
| sov2 because I wanted to improve the workplace environment | .598 | |
| sov3 because I wanted the best for our customers/clients | .704 | |
| sov4 because I wanted to make things better for the organisation | .960 | |

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To confirm that the employee silence and employee voice models are empirically distinct concepts and are a good fit, I conducted a series of CFAs using IBM SPSS Amos Version 27. CFA results present the two factor employee silence model as a good fit based on the fit indices [$\chi 2$ (n = 164) = 21.13; $p$ = 0.007; df = 8; GFI = .96,CFI = .95, TLI = .91; RMSEA = .100] and a significantly better fit than the uni-dimensional model [$\chi 2$ ($n$ = 164) = 125.83; $p$ = 0.000; df = 9; GFI = .77, CFI = .58, TLI = .30; RMSEA = .282]. The two factor model is an excellent fit based on the fit indices and a reasonable fit based on the RMSEA for employee voice [$\chi 2$ (n = 176) = 18.47; $p$ = 0.018; df = 8; GFI = .97,CFI = .97, TLI = .94; RMSEA = .086], as well as a significantly better fit than the uni-dimensional model [$\chi 2$ (n = 176) = 192.31; $p$ = 0.000; df = 9; GFI = .74,CFI = .46, TLI = .10; RMSEA = .341]. The RMSEA result for both employee silence and voice do not present the models as excellent fit, however, as the sample size is smaller than the standard size required, $N \leq 250$, RMSEA "tend to over reject substantially true-population models" (Hu and Bentler, 1998, p. 447).

Taking into consideration the results of EFA and CFA as well as the reliability analyses conducted to examine the validity and reliability of the employee silence and employee voice scales, the two factor model have shown to be empirically distinct concepts with face validity, discriminant validity and good reliability, therefore, will be used to conduct further analyses to test the hypotheses of the study. I consulted two experienced academics to check the Employee Voice Scale for face validity, which they confirmed to be of high face validity. The following sections provide details of the statistical analyses conducted to test the eight hypotheses developed from the findings of Study 1 and the review of existing literature.

### 5.3 Effects of Change: Independent Samples *t*-test

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to test whether there are statistically significant differences between the means of psychological well-being when situations improved as a result of voice and when there were no changes to the situation due to silence and voice. The tests were repeated for turnover intention as the dependent variable.

For both the UK and Malaysia, the data suggests that situations were more likely to improve as a result of voice compared to when employees remained silent about workplace issues of concern. For the UK, 2 out of 3 employees reported that the issues they spoke up about resulted in improvements (i.e. better). In contrast, 93% of employees reported that the issues they remained silent about did not result in any improvements (i.e. no change or worse). For Malaysia, around 3 out of 4 employees reported that the issues they spoke up about resulted in improvements and the reverse was reported with around 3 out of 4 issues that employees remained silent about did not change or became worse. Table 5.15 presents an overview of the figures.

**Table 5.15 Outcome of silence and voice by country**

| Type of Experience | UK<br>N (%) | Malaysia<br>N (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Voice | | |
| Better | 53 (66.3) | 70 (72.9) |
| No change | 24 (30.0) | 21 (21.9) |
| Worse | 3 (3.8) | 5 (5.2) |
| Silence | | |
| Better | 7 (6.9) | 17 (27.4) |
| No change | 76 (74.5) | 21 (33.9) |
| Worse | 19 (18.6) | 24 (38.7) |

Before conducting the independent samples *t*-test, the data was examined to ensure all assumptions were met. The data points for Voice – Better, Voice – No change, and Silence – No change were checked using box and whiskers plots and found to be acceptable. Levene's Test was performed to check for homogeneity of variance and variances were found to be equal for the two sets of independent samples for both countries.

Effect of Change on Psychological Well-being

***UK Sample***

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean for the psychological well-being score when situations improved as a result of voice and when situations did not change as a result of silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(127) = .97$, $p = .326$, therefore, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted as this meets the assumption that the variances are equal across groups. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.16.

**Table 5.16 UK: Psychological well-being for voice – better and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – Better | 53 | 43.87 | 7.96 | 3.223 (0.117, 6.329) | 0.042 | 0.373 |
| Silence – No change | 76 | 40.64 | 9.29 | - | | |

The result shows that when employees speak up about issues of concern and experience an improvement, their psychological well-being score was significantly higher than the psychological well-being score of employees who remained silent about their concern and did not experience a change in the situation, $t(127) = 2.05$, $p < 0.05$. The effect size of 0.373 suggests a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

Next, an independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean for the psychological well-being score when situations did not change for employees as a result of voice and silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(98) = .73$, $p = .395$, therefore the analysis was conducted. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.17.

**Table 5.17 UK: Psychological well-being for voice – no change and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – No change | 24 | 44.54 | 7.10 | 3.897 (-0.203, 7.997) | 0.062 | 0.442 |
| Silence – No change | 76 | 40.64 | 9.29 | | | |

The result shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the psychological well-being of the employees when they experience no change as a result of voice and silence,

*t*(98) = 1.89, *p* > 0.05. The effect size of 0.442 suggests a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

***Malaysia Sample***

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean for the psychological well-being score when situations improved as a result of voice and when situations did not change as a result of silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, *F*(89) = 3.46, *p* = .066, therefore, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.18.

**Table 5.18 MY: Psychological well-being for voice – better and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – Better | 70 | 45.86 | 5.33 | 5.571 (2.780, 8.363) | 0.000 | 0.927 |
| Silence – No change | 21 | 40.29 | 6.61 | - | | |

The result shows a significant difference in employees' psychological well-being score when the situations improved as a result of voice, *t*(89) = 3.97, *p* < 0.01. The effect size of 0.927 suggests a large effect as it is above 0.8 (Cohen, 1988).

An independent samples *t*-test was then performed to compare the mean for the psychological well-being score when situations did not change as a result of voice and silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, *F*(40) = 0.25, *p* = .622, therefore, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.19.

**Table 5.19 MY: Psychological well-being for voice – no change and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – No change | 21 | 42.38 | 7.20 | 2.095 (-2.216, 6.407) | 0.330 | 0.303 |
| Silence – No change | 21 | 40.29 | 6.61 | - | | |

It can be observed that the mean psychological well-being score for employees who did not experience change as a result of silence (M = 40.29) is lower than the psychological well-being score of employees who spoke up and did not experience a change in the situation (M = 42.38). However, the difference is found to be statistically non significant, *t*(40) = .98, *p* = 0.33. The effect size of 0.303 suggests a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

Effect of Change on Turnover Intention

***UK Sample***

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean for the turnover intention score when situations improved as a result of voice and when situations did not change as a result of silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(127) = .91$, $p = .342$, therefore, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.20.

**Table 5.20 UK: Turnover intention for voice – better and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – Better | 53 | 15.70 | 5.66 | -3.328 (-5.214, -1.443) | 0.000 | 0.619 |
| Silence – No change | 76 | 19.03 | 5.08 | - | | |

The mean turnover intention score is significantly lower for employees who experienced improvement after speaking up about issues of concern, $t(127) = -3.49$, $p < 0.01$. The effect size of 0.619 suggests a medium (0.5) to large (0.8) effect (Cohen, 1988).

Next, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(98) = .19$, $p = .660$, therefore independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean for the turnover intention score when situations did not change for employees as a result of voice and silence. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.21.

**Table 5.21 UK: Turnover intention for voice – no change and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – No change | 24 | 20.25 | 5.32 | 1.224 (-1.162, 3.610) | 0.311 | 0.238 |
| Silence – No change | 76 | 19.03 | 5.08 | - | | |

The mean turnover intention score is not significantly higher for employees who experienced no change after speaking up about issues of concern compared to the mean turnover intention score for employees who experienced no change as a result of silence, $t(98) = 1.02$, $p > 0.05$. The effect size of 0.238 suggests a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

***Malaysia Sample***

The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(89) = .67$, $p = .415$, therefore independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean turnover intention score when situations improved for employees as a result of voice and when situations did not change as a result of silence. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.22.

**Table 5.22 MY: Turnover intention for voice – better and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – Better | 70 | 16.23 | 4.17 | -4.676 (-6.772, -2.580) | 0.000 | 1.103 |
| Silence – No change | 21 | 20.90 | 4.46 | - | | |

Similar to the UK, the mean turnover intention score is significantly lower for employees who experienced improvement after speaking up about issues of concern, $t(89) = -4.43$, $p < 0.01$. The effect size of 1.103 suggests a large effect as it is above 0.8 (Cohen, 1988).

Next, an independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean for the turnover intention score when situations did not change as a result of voice as well as when situations did not change as a result of silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(40) = .81$, $p = .372$, therefore, the independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.23.

**Table 5.23 MY: Turnover intention for voice – no change and silence – no change**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voice – No change | 21 | 20.33 | 4.03 | -0.571 (-3.222, -2.079) | 0.670 | 0.134 |
| Silence – No change | 21 | 20.90 | 4.46 | - | | |

The result shows that there is no significant difference between the mean of employees who experience no change as a result of voice and silence. The mean turnover intention score is not significantly lower for employees who experienced no change after speaking up about issues of concern, $t(40) = -0.44$, $p > 0.05$ compared to employees who did not experience changes as a result of silence. The effect size of 0.134 suggests a small effect as it is less than 0.2 (Cohen, 1988).

### 5.4 Silence and Voice Orientation: Independent Samples *t*-test

UK Sample

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean of pro-self silence and prosocial silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(202) = .98$, $p = .323$, therefore, independent samples *t*-test was conducted as this meets the assumption that the variances are equal across groups. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.24.

**Table 5.24 UK: Mean score difference between pro-self silence and prosocial silence**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pro-self silence | 102 | 13.13 | 4.73 | 1.971 (0.717, 3.224) | 0.000 | 0.434 |
| Prosocial silence | 102 | 11.16 | 4.34 | - | | |

The mean score for pro-self silence is significantly higher than the mean score for prosocial silence, $t(202) = 3.10$, $p < 0.01$. This suggests that the UK participants are more likely to remain silent to protect themselves with the intention to avoid or relieve self from consequences that are perceived to be personally unpleasant. The effect size of 0.434 suggests a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

Next, the difference of mean scores between pro-self voice and prosocial voice are examined. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was significant, $F(158) = 6.54$, $p = .011$. Therefore, the results for the independent samples *t*-test were reported based on statistics for equal variances not assumed. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.25.

**Table 5.25 UK: Mean score difference between pro-self voice and prosocial voice**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pro-self voice | 80 | 13.83 | 5.30 | -1.825 (-3.305, -0.345) | 0.020 | 0.385 |
| Prosocial voice | 80 | 15.65 | 4.10 | - | | |

The mean score for prosocial voice is significantly higher than the mean score for pro-self voice, $t(149) = -2.43$, $p < 0.05$. This suggests that the UK participants are more likely to speak up for others or the organisation based on altruism or cooperative motives. The effect size of 0.385 suggests a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

Malaysia Sample

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the mean of pro-self silence and prosocial silence. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was non significant, $F(122) = .54$, $p = .464$, therefore, independent samples *t*-test was conducted as this meets the assumption that the variances are equal across groups. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.26.

**Table 5.26 MY: Mean score difference between pro-self silence and prosocial silence**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pro-self silence | 62 | 13.53 | 3.66 | 0.081 (-1.260, 1.421) | 0.910 | 0.021 |
| Prosocial silence | 62 | 13.45 | 3.88 | - | | |

The are no significant differences between the mean score for pro-self silence and prosocial silence, $t(122) = 0.12$, $p > 0.05$. This suggests that the Malaysian participants remain silent to protect themselves from negative consequences as well as to benefit others or the organisation based on altruism or cooperative motives. The effect size of 0.021 suggests a small effect as it is less than 0.2 (Cohen, 1988).

Next, the difference of mean scores between pro-self voice and prosocial voice are examined. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was significant, $F(190) = 0.00$, $p = .954$. Therefore, the results for the independent samples *t*-test were reported based on statistics for equal variances not assumed. The descriptives and level of significance are presented in Table 5.27.

**Table 5.27 MY: Mean score difference between pro-self voice and prosocial voice**

| Outcome | N | M | SD | Mean difference (95% CI) | p-value | Cohen's *d* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pro-self voice | 96 | 15.43 | 3.58 | -1.312 (-2.324, -0.301) | 0.010 | 0.385 |
| Prosocial voice | 96 | 16.74 | 3.52 | - | | |

The mean score for prosocial voice is significantly higher than the mean score for pro-self voice, $t(190) = -2.56$, $p < 0.05$. This suggests that the Malaysian participants are also more likely to speak up for others or the organisation based on altruism or cooperative motives. The effect size of 0.385 indicates a small (0.2) to medium (0.5) effect (Cohen, 1988).

## 5.5 Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention: Simple Regression Analysis

UK sample

Before conducting the regression analysis, a pre-analysis was performed to check the assumptions for regression. The relationship between the two outcome variables is linear. The scatter in Figure 5.5 forms a line in the plot. The residuals were also checked and are found to be approximately normally distributed (see Figure 5.6).

**Figure 5.5 UK: Scatterplot of Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention**

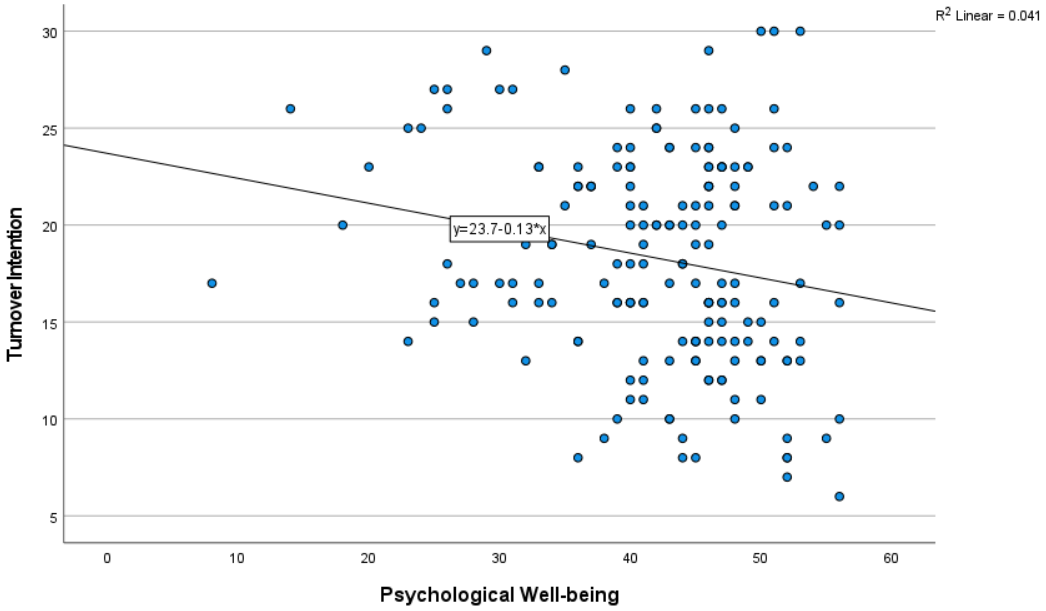
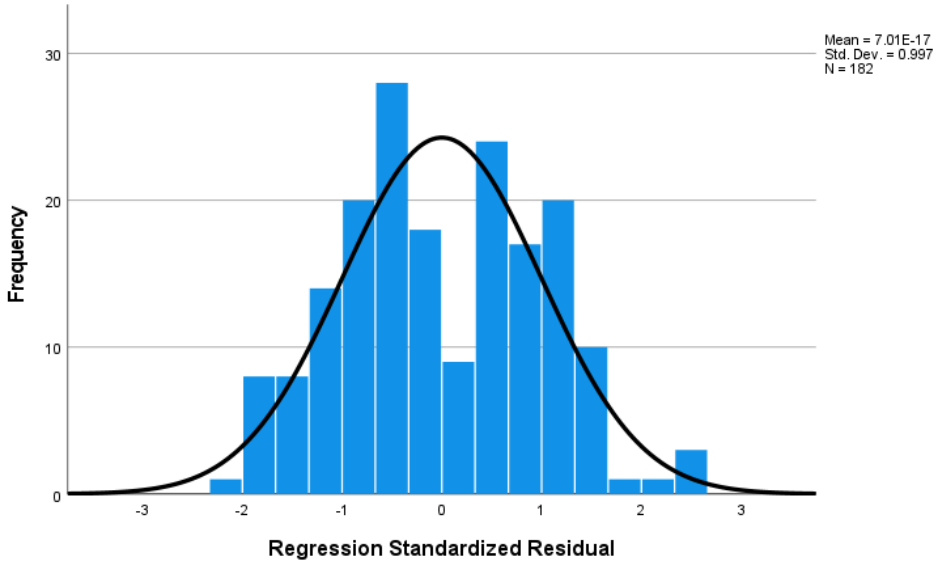



**Figure 5.6 UK: Normality of Residuals of Turnover Intention**



The scatterplot of standardised predicted values versus standardised residuals in Figure 5.7, showed that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity, and the residuals are normally distributed (see Figure 5.8).

**Figure 5.7 UK: Homoscedasticity of Turnover Intention**

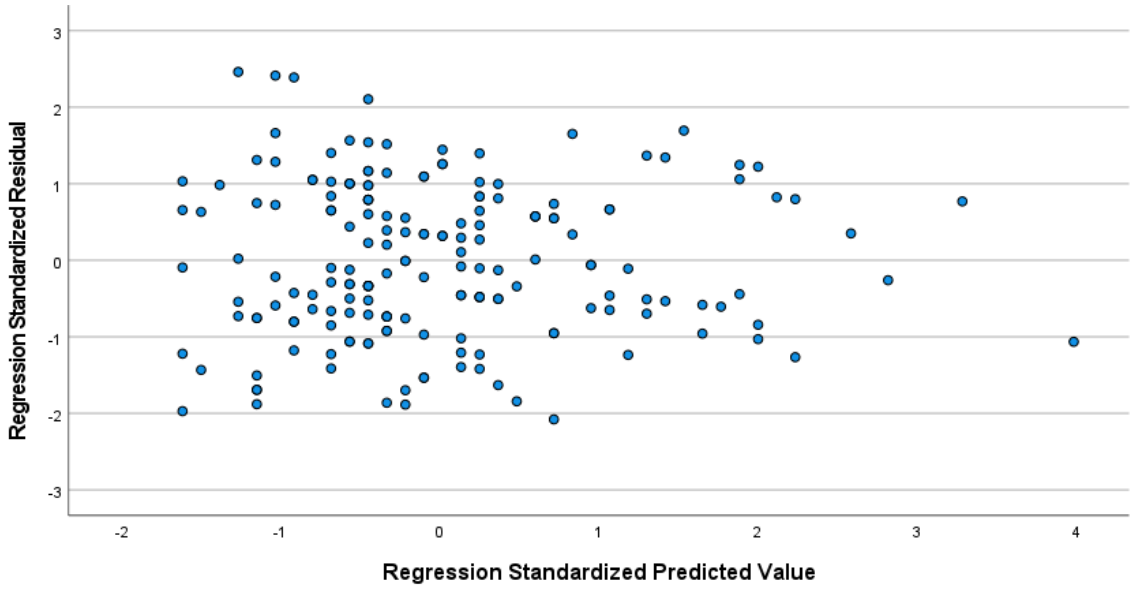
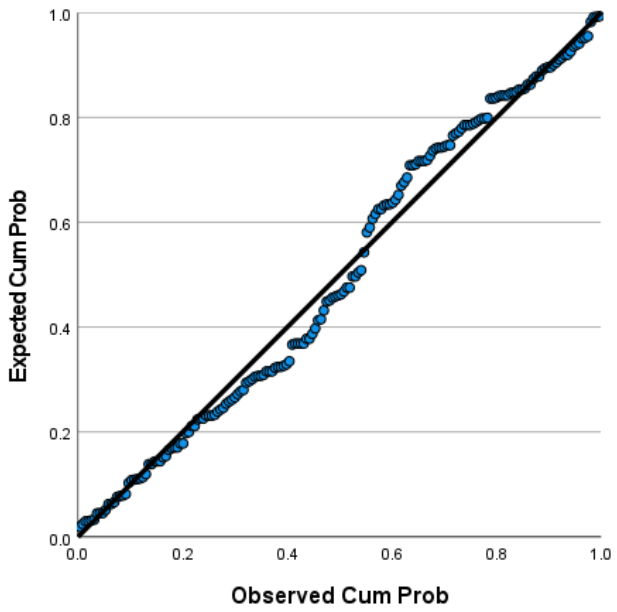



**Figure 5.8 UK: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardised Residual**



Simple linear regression was carried out to investigate the relationship between psychological well-being and turnover intention. The scatterplot showed that there is a negative linear relationship between the two, which was confirmed with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of $r$ = -0.20. Simple linear regression showed a significant relationship between psychological well-being and turnover intention at the 0.01 level ($p$ = 0.006).

This shows that employees with high psychological well-being score have lower intentions to leave the organisation while employees with low psychological well-being score are more likely to have intentions to leave the organisation.

Malaysia sample

A pre-analysis was performed to check the assumptions for regression. The relationship between the two variables of psychological well-being and turnover intention is linear. The scatter in Figure 5.9 forms a line in the plot. The residuals were also checked and are found to be approximately normally distributed (see Figure 5.10).

The scatterplot of standardised predicted values versus standardised residuals in Figure 5.11, showed that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity and the residuals are normally distributed (see Figure 5.12).

**Figure 5.9 MY: Scatterplot of Psychological Well-being and Turnover Intention**

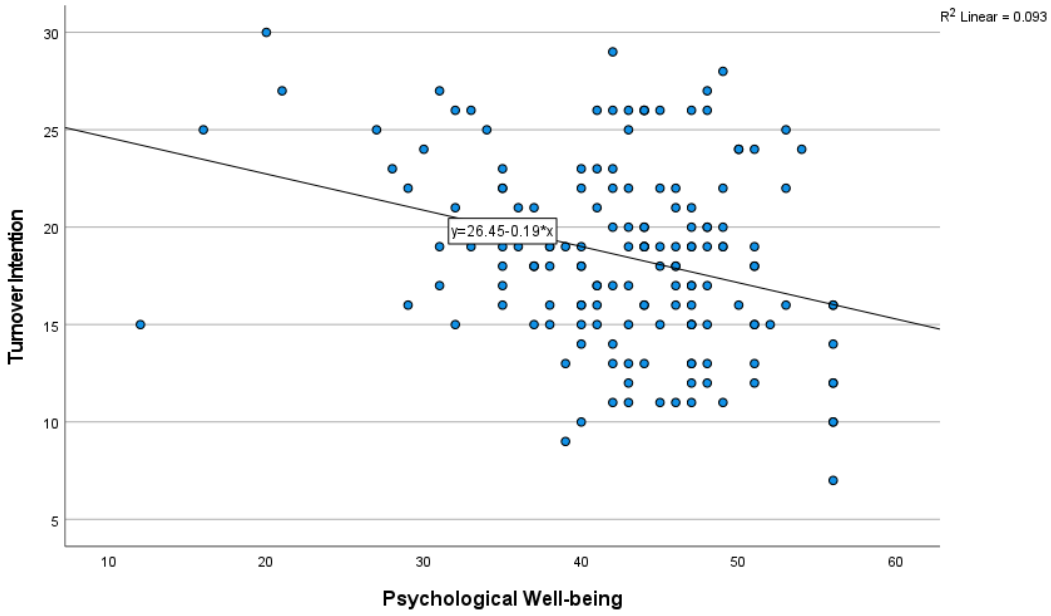


**Figure 5.10 MY: Normality of Residuals of Turnover Intention**

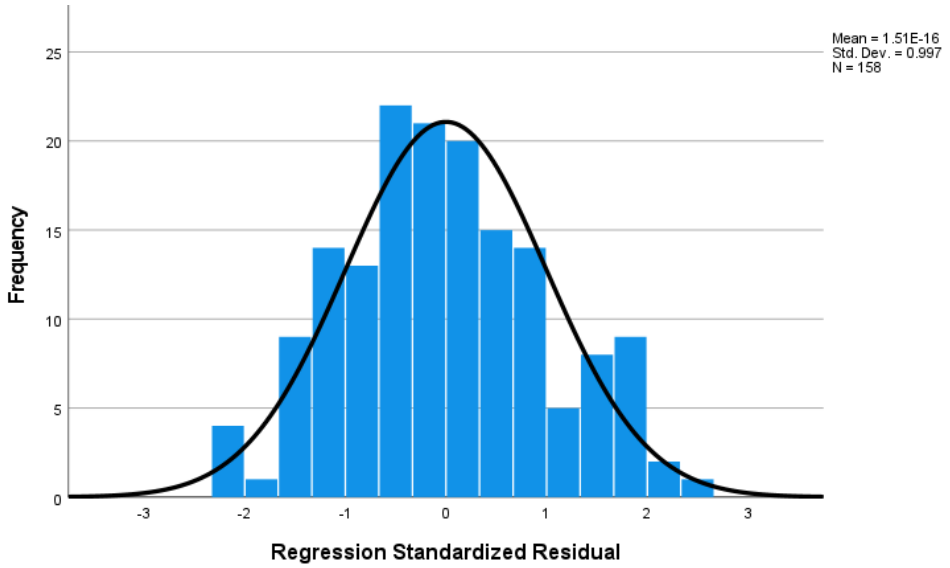



**Figure 5.11 MY: Homoscedasticity of Turnover Intention**

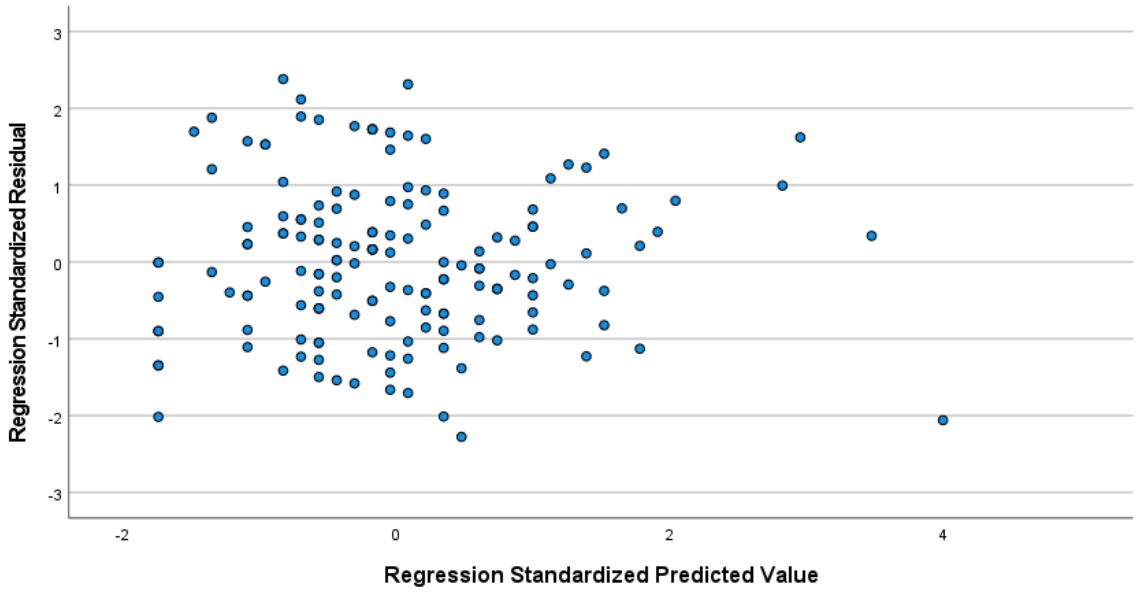
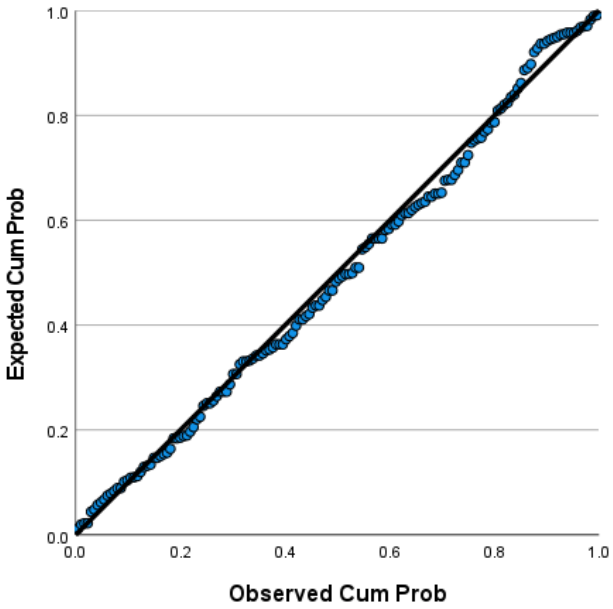


**Figure 5.12 MY: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardised Residual**




Simple linear regression was carried out to investigate the relationship between psychological well-being and turnover intention. The scatterplot showed that there is a negative linear relationship between the two, which was confirmed with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of $r$ = -0.31. Simple linear regression showed a significant relationship between psychological well-being and turnover intention at the 0.01 level ($p$ = 0.000).

Similar to the UK, this shows that employees in Malaysia with high psychological well-being score have lower intentions to leave the organisation while employees with low psychological well-being score are more likely to have intentions to leave the organisation.

## 5.6 Participant Characteristics and Correlates

Participant Characteristics

This section presents the correlations between demographic and employment characteristics and the two types of employee silence and employee voice for the UK and Malaysia. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to test whether there is a statistically significant difference between the mean of employee silence for participant characteristics that are dichotomous in nature; gender whether female or male, whether employee is in their first job, and type of issue whether it is person-related or task-related.

### *Employee silence*

The data points were checked using box and whiskers plots and are found to be acceptable. There were also no curvilinear relationships found between the continuous variables and the two types of employee silence. The Pearson correlation coefficients are shown in Table 5.28.

**Table 5.28 Correlations between employee silence and participant characteristics**

| | Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Age | – | .63 | -.26 | -.15 | -.04 | .01 |
| 2 | Organisational tenure | .50 | – | -.23 | .00 | -.02 | .00 |
| 3 | Actual work hours | .09 | .20 | – | -.14 | .14 | .12 |
| 4 | Hierarchical distance | -.05 | -.05 | -.15 | – | .05 | .01 |
| 5 | Pro-self silence | -.17 | .05 | .09 | .00 | – | .41 |
| 6 | Prosocial silence | .02 | -.05 | -.06 | .04 | .13 | – |

*Note. UK Sample; N = 102. MY Sample (in grey blocks); N = 62. * p < .05. ** p < .01*

The data did not show any statistically significant differences in employee silence according to age, organisational tenure, actual work hours, and hierarchical distance.

The results of the independent samples *t*-tests show that for the UK, employees were more likely to remain silent about person-related issues for prosocial reasons, $t(100) = 3.13$, $p = 0.00$. Cohen's *d* of .65 indicate a medium to large effect size, and the 95% confidence interval between group means is -4.44 to -1.00. The mean prosocial scores were 9.37 (SD = 4.60) for task-related issues and 12.09 (SD = 3.92) for person-related issues. For Malaysia, there are no statistically significant differences in employee silence according to gender, whether employee is in their first job, and type of issue.

***Employee voice***

The data points were checked using box and whiskers plots and are found to be acceptable. There were also no curvilinear relationships found between the continuous variables and the two types of employee voice. The Pearson correlation coefficients are shown in Table 5.29.

**Table 5.29 Correlations between employee voice and participant characteristics**

| | Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Age | – | .47 | -.28 | -.14 | -.29** | -.11 |
| 2 | Organisational tenure | .51 | – | -.18 | -.16 | -.22* | .01 |
| 3 | Actual work hours | -.06 | .04 | – | .15 | .09 | .15 |
| 4 | Hierarchical distance | .01 | -.06 | .16 | – | .03 | -.06 |
| 5 | Pro-self voice | -.09 | .01 | -.02 | .07 | – | .36 |
| 6 | Prosocial voice | -.08 | -.06 | -.06 | .02 | -.35 | – |

*Note. UK Sample; N = 80. MY Sample (in grey blocks); N = 96. * p < .05. ** p < .01*

The data shows statistically significant differences in pro-self voice according to age and organisational tenure for the Malaysia sample. Age and organisational tenure are negatively related to pro-self voice. This indicate that Malaysian employees who are older tend not to engage in pro-self voice ($r$ = -.29, $p$ = .004). Similarly, Malaysian employees with longer organisational tenure are less likely to engage in pro-self voice ($r$ = -.22, $p$ = .033). The effect sizes are small to medium as the correlations are between -.10 and -.30 (Cohen & Cohen, 1975).

The independent samples *t*-tests showed that for both the UK and Malaysia, there are no statistically significant differences in employee voice according to gender, whether employee is in their first job, and type of issue.

Correlates

This section presents the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between the two types of employee silence and employee voice and the key variables in this study for the UK and Malaysia samples.

***Employee silence***

The reliability, descriptive statistics, and bivariate correlations for the predictor, interaction, and outcome variables are summarised in Table 5.30 for the UK and Malaysia (MY).

**Table 5.30 Reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations among the key variables (employee silence)**

| | Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Pro-self silence | – | .41** | .23 | -.16 | .15 | .03 | .24 | .18 | .15 | .05 |
| 2. | Prosocial silence | .13 | – | .04 | -.11 | .02 | -.08 | .44** | .26* | .10 | -.21 |
| 3. | Choice | .08 | .04 | – | -.09 | -.11 | .21 | .16 | .17 | .17 | -.12 |
| 4. | Self-voice behavior | -.04 | .02 | -.04 | – | .26* | .36** | .18 | .19 | .33** | -.02 |
| 5. | Issue importance | .44** | -.08 | -.05 | .20* | – | .23 | -.16 | -.24 | .17 | .43** |
| 6. | Outcome expectation | .10 | -.12 | .13 | .00 | .10 | – | -.05 | -.17 | .12 | .25 |
| 7. | Perceived supervisor support | -.20* | .00 | .07 | .13 | -.20* | .07 | – | .78** | .27* | -.47** |
| 8. | Perceived organisational support | -.18 | -.03 | .18 | .19 | -.23* | -.14 | .57** | – | .20 | -.49** |
| 9. | Psychological well-being | -.01 | .05 | .03 | .24* | .00 | .14 | .09 | .04 | – | -.09 |
| 10. | Turnover intention | .28** | .05 | -.11 | -.06 | .27** | .03 | -.48** | -.47** | -.16 | – |
| *UK α / MY α* | | .82/.69 | .72/.78 | – | .91/.88 | – | – | .89/.81 | .90/.84 | .92/.92 | .79/.77 |
| *UK M / MY M* | | 13.13/ 13.53 | 11.16/ 13.45 | 5.36/ 4.34 | 26.38/ 26.56 | 3.23/ 3.34 | 5.02/ 4.44 | 19.48/ 17.74 | 16.53/ 16.48 | 40.71/ 38.95 | 19.08/ 20.27 |
| *UK SD / MY SD* | | 4.73/ 3.66 | 4.34/ 3.88 | 1.72/ 1.64 | 7.47/ 6.12 | 1.04/ .90 | 1.69/ 1.39 | 6.02/ 4.24 | 5.95/ 4.36 | 8.87/ 8.58 | 4.90/ 4.35 |

*Note. UK Sample; N = 102. MY Sample (in grey blocks); N = 62. α = coefficient alpha. * p < .05. ** p < .01.*

In the UK, issue importance is positively related to pro-self silence. This indicates that employees were more likely to engage in pro-self silence as the level of importance of the issue of concern increases ($r$ = .44, $p$ = .000). When perceived supervisor support is lower, employees are more likely to remain silent for pro-self reasons ($r$ = -.20, $p$ = .050). There were no statistically significant correlations between the two types of employee silence and psychological well-being; pro-self silence ($r$ = -.01, $p$ = .090), prosocial silence ($r$ = .05, $p$ = .595). However, employees who engaged in pro-self silence have higher intentions to leave their jobs and organisations ($r$ = .28, $p$ = .005).

In Malaysia, pro-self silence and prosocial silence are positively related. This suggests that issues that employees remain silent about are both pro-self and prosocial in nature ($r$ = .41, $p$ = .001). Prosocial silence is positively related to both perceived supervisor support ($r$ = .44, $p$ = .000) and perceived organisational support ($r$ = .26, $p$ = .042). This indicates that employees were more likely to remain silent for prosocial reasons when perceived support from line manager and the organisation are higher. There were no statistically significant correlations between the two types of employee silence and the two study outcomes; psychological well-being and turnover intention.

***Employee voice***

The reliability, descriptive statistics, and bivariate correlations for the predictor, interaction, and outcome variables are summarised in Table 5.31 for the UK and Malaysia (MY).

In the UK, there were no statistically significant correlations between employee voice and other variables. However, pro-self voice and prosocial voice are negatively related.

In Malaysia, employees were more likely to engage in pro-self voice as the level of importance of the issue of concern increases ($r$ = .22, $p$ = .032). Furthermore, employees who engaged in pro-self voice had higher turnover intentions ($r$ = .27, $p$ = .008). On the other hand, prosocial voice is positively related to choice ($r$ = .21, $p$ = .045), self-voice behaviour ($r$ = .30, $p$ = .003), and issue importance ($r$ = .24, $p$ = .021). Employees who engaged in prosocial voice had better psychological well-being ($r$ = .23, $p$ = .027).

**Table 5.31 Reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations among the key variables (employee voice)**

| | Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Pro-self voice | – | .36** | .08 | .09 | .22* | .06 | -.19 | -.16 | .03 | .27** |
| 2. | Prosocial voice | -.35** | – | .21* | .30** | .24* | .12 | .15 | .16 | .23* | .08 |
| 3. | Choice | -.03 | .01 | – | .26** | .18 | .21* | .11 | .02 | .11 | -.04 |
| 4. | Self-voice behavior | -.19 | .22 | .25* | – | .15 | .21* | .15 | .12 | .18 | -.02 |
| 5. | Issue importance | .18 | -.09 | .15 | .08 | – | .08 | .01 | .07 | .18 | .14 |
| 6. | Outcome expectation | -.11 | .03 | .07 | .12 | -.04 | – | .12 | .10 | .15 | -.10 |
| 7. | Perceived supervisor support | -.12 | .06 | .14 | .31** | -.08 | -.12 | – | .72** | .30** | -.54** |
| 8. | Perceived organisational support | -.01 | .15 | .06 | .20 | -.15 | -.03 | .59** | – | .39** | -.52** |
| 9. | Psychological well-being | .18 | .06 | .02 | .17 | .07 | .00 | .18 | .36** | – | -.33** |
| 10. | Turnover intention | .04 | -.06 | -.11 | -.18 | .23* | .12 | -.60** | -.60** | -.21 | – |
| *UK α / MY α* | | .80/.70 | 0.71/.87 | – | .91/.93 | – | – | .94/.83 | .94/.87 | .91/.87 | .87/.77 |
| *UK M / MY M* | | 13.83/ 15.43 | 15.65/ 16.74 | 6.36/ 5.44 | 31.84/ 33.01 | 4.05/ 3.80 | 4.86/ 4.81 | 20.83/ 20.68 | 17.83/ 19.42 | 43.99/ 45.10 | 17.26/ 17.36 |
| *UK SD / MY SD* | | 5.30/ 3.58 | 4.10/ 3.52 | 1.31/ 1.46 | 7.03/ 6.67 | .67/ .66 | 1.61/ 1.33 | 6.59/ 4.55 | 6.68/ 4.76 | 7.84/ 5.91 | 5.90/ 4.56 |

*Note. UK Sample; N = 80. MY Sample (in grey blocks); N = 96. α = coefficient alpha. * p < .05. ** p < .01.*

### 5.7 Moderating Effect of Perceived Support: Moderated Regression Analysis

Employee Silence

Moderated regression analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis of the moderating effect of perceived support on employees' psychological well-being by examining the relationship between employee silence, perceived support, and psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for pro-self silence, prosocial silence, perceived supervisor support, perceived organisational support, and psychological well-being are summarised in Table 5.32 for both countries. Not all correlations were found to be significant.

**Table 5.32 Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the UK and Malaysia**

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Psychological Well-being (PWB) | 1 | .15 | .10 | .27** | .20 |
| 2. Pro-self Silence (SES) | -.01 | 1 | .41** | .24* | .18 |
| 3. Prosocial Silence (SOS) | .05 | .13 | 1 | .44** | .26* |
| 4. Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) | .09 | -.20* | .00 | 1 | .78** |
| 5. Perceived Organisational Support (POS) | .04 | -.18 | -.03 | .57** | 1 |
| *UK M / MY M* | 40.71 / 38.95 | 13.13 / 13.53 | 11.16 / 13.45 | 19.48 / 17.74 | 16.53 / 16.48 |
| *UK SD / MY SD* | 8.87 / 8.58 | 4.73 / 3.66 | 4.34 / 3.88 | 6.02 / 4.24 | 5.95 / 4.36 |

*Note. UK Sample; N = 102. MY Sample (in grey blocks); N = 62. * p < .05. ** p < .01.*

The model summary and regression coefficients for the UK are presented in Table 5.33 and Table 5.34. Model 1 (without the interaction term) was found to be non-significant, $F(4, 97) = .26$, $p = .906$, $R^2 = .01$. However, the overall model that includes the interaction term was found to be significant, $F(8, 93) = 2.31$, $p = .026$, $R^2 = 0.17$ indicating a small to medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). Model 2 with the interaction between perceived support and employee silence accounted for significantly more variance than just perceived support and employee silence, $R^2$ change = .155, $p = .003$, indicating that there is potentially significant moderation between perceived support and employee silence on psychological well-being.

**Table 5.33 UK: Model summary statistics**

| Model | R | R Square | R Square Change | Sig. F Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .102 | .010 | .010 | .906 |
| 2 | .407 | .166 | .155 | .003 |

**Table 5.34 UK: Linear model of predictors of psychological well-being**

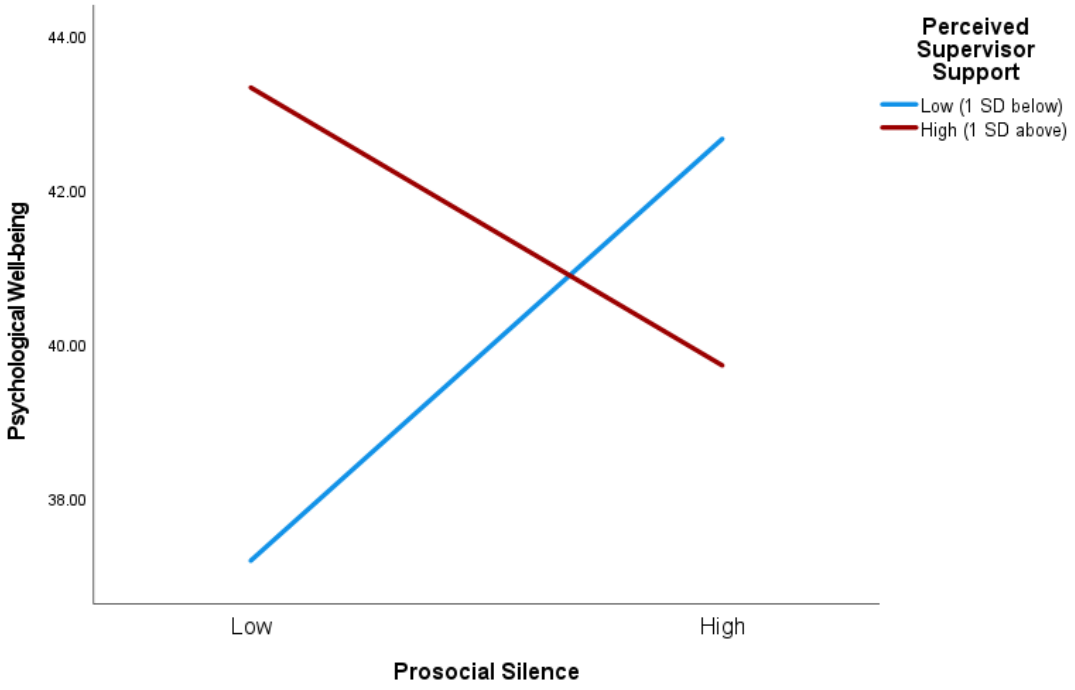
| | Unstandardised Coefficients | | Standardised Coefficients | | | 95% Confidence Intervals for B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | b | S.E. | Beta (ß) | t | Sig. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Constant | 40.36 | .85 | | 47.53 | .000 | 38.68 | 42.05 |
| Pro-self Silence (SES) | .10 | .19 | .06 | .55 | .583 | -.27 | .47 |
| Prosocial Silence (SOS) | .10 | .20 | .05 | .51 | .613 | -.29 | .50 |
| Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) | .25 | .18 | .17 | 1.45 | .150 | -.09 | .60 |
| Perceived Organisational Support (POS) | -.10 | .18 | -.07 | -.57 | .569 | -.46 | .25 |
| SES x PSS | .00 | .04 | .00 | -.00 | .997 | -.08 | .08 |
| SOS x PSS | -.12 | .04 | -.35 | -2.89 | .005 | -.19 | -.04 |
| SES x POS | -.08 | .04 | -.30 | -2.06 | .042 | -.15 | -.00 |
| SOS x POS | .04 | .04 | .11 | .86 | .391 | -.05 | .13 |

Pro-self silence, prosocial silence, perceived supervisor support, and perceived organisational support were added to the regression first. In the final model (Model 2), regression equations for the main effects revealed that pro-self silence b = .10, $t(97) = .55$, $p = .583$, prosocial silence b = .10, $t(97) = .51$, $p = .613$, perceived supervisor support b = .25, $t(97) = 1.45$, $p = .150$, and perceived organisational support b = -.10, $t(97) = -.57$, $p = .569$ did not predict psychological well-being. To ensure issues with high multicollinearity with the interaction term is avoided, the variables were centred and interaction terms were created (Aiken and West, 1991). The addition of the interaction terms accounted for a significant proportion of additional variance in psychological well-being, $\Delta R^2 = .155$, $\Delta F(4, 93) = 4.33$, $p = .003$. The regression revealed a significant interaction effect between prosocial silence and perceived supervisor support b = -.12, $t(97) = -2.89$, $p = .005$, and pro-self silence and perceived organisational support b = -.09, $t(97) = -2.06$, $p = .042$. However, there was no significant interaction effect between pro-self silence and perceived supervisor support b = .00, $t(97) = -.00$, $p = .997$, and

prosocial silence and perceived organisational support b = .04, *t*(97) = .86, *p* = .391. Table 5.20 shows the 95% confidence intervals for the UK sample.

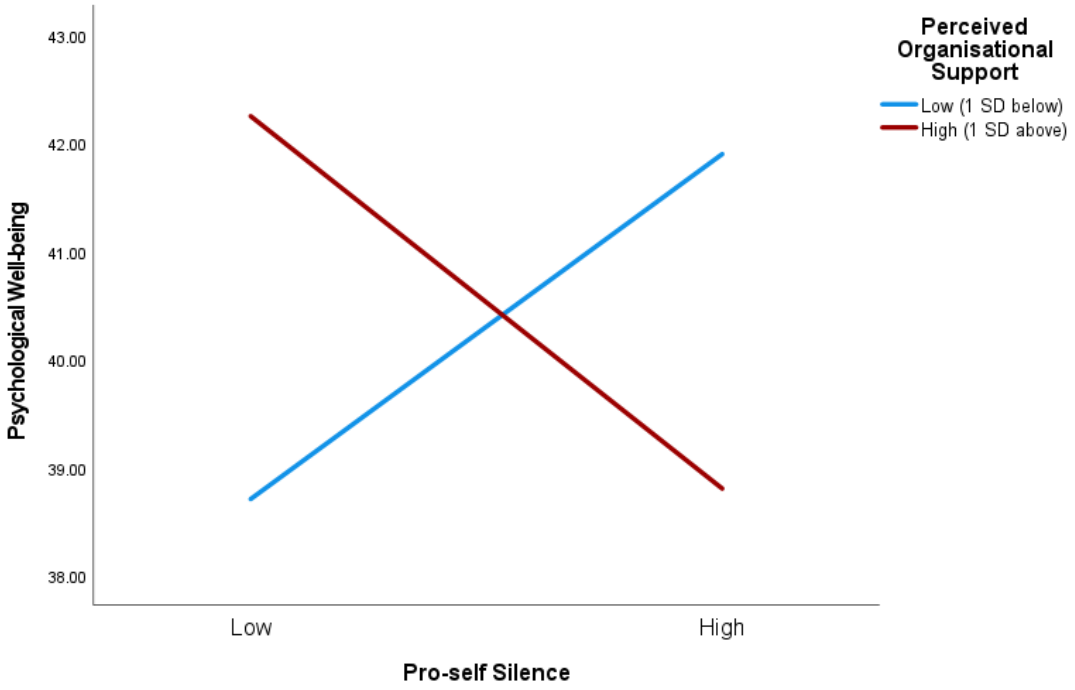
As perceived supervisor support was found to significantly moderate prosocial silence and perceived organisational support was found to significantly moderate pro-self silence, simple slopes analyses were conducted to examine these interactions. The result for the interaction between prosocial silence and perceived supervisor support are presented in Figure 5.13. The analysis indicated a crossover interaction. When perceived supervisor support is low, prosocial silence is positively related to psychological well-being. This suggests that engaging in higher prosocial silence leads to higher levels of psychological well-being.

**Figure 5.13 UK: The moderating effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on the relationship between Prosocial Silence and Psychological Well-being**




Similarly, the analysis also indicated a crossover interaction between pro-self silence and perceived organisational support. When perceived organisational support is low, pro-self silence is positively related to psychological well-being. This suggests that engaging in higher pro-self silence leads to higher levels of psychological well-being. The result for the interaction between pro-self silence and perceived organisational support is presented in Figure 5.14.

**Figure 5.14 UK: The moderating effect of Perceived Organisational Support on the relationship between Pro-self Silence and Psychological Well-being**




The model summary and regression coefficients for Malaysia are presented in Table 5.35 and Table 5.36. However, Model 1 (without interaction terms) was found to be non-significant, $F(8, 53) = .903$, $p = .521$. The addition of the interaction terms also did not account for a significant amount of additional variance in psychological well-being, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $\Delta F(4, 53) = .534$, $p = .711$, $R^2 = 0.12$ indicating a small to medium effect size.

**Table 5.35 MY: Model summary statistics**

| Model | R | R Square | R Square Change | Sig. F Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .291 | .085 | .085 | .275 |
| 2 | .346 | .120 | .035 | .711 |

This sample revealed no significant interaction effect between pro-self silence and perceived supervisor support, b=-.00, $t(8600)=-.20$, $p=.84$, prosocial silence and perceived supervisor support, b=.01, $t(8600)=1.70$, $p=.09$, pro-self silence and perceived organisational support, b=-.00, $t(8600)=-.20$, $p=.84$, and prosocial silence and perceived organisational support, b=.01, $t(8600)=1.70$, $p=.09$ in predicting psychological well-being. Table 5.36 shows the 95% confidence intervals for the interaction terms for the Malaysia sample. As the interactions are not significant, simple slope analysis was not conducted.

**Table 5.36 MY: Linear model of predictors of psychological well-being**

| | Unstandardised Coefficients | | Standardised Coefficients | | | 95% Confidence Intervals for B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | b | S.E. | Beta (ß) | t | Sig. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Constant | 39.54 | 1.21 | | 32.67 | .000 | 37.11 | 41.96 |
| Pro-self Silence (SES) | .37 | .36 | .16 | 1.04 | .303 | -.34 | 1.08 |
| Prosocial Silence (SOS) | -.22 | .35 | -.10 | -.62 | .539 | -.93 | .49 |
| Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) | .80 | .51 | .39 | 1.55 | .127 | -.23 | 1.83 |
| Perceived Organisational Support (POS) | -.35 | .48 | -.18 | -.73 | .470 | -1.32 | .62 |
| SES x PSS | .08 | .12 | .23 | .68 | .503 | -.17 | .33 |
| SOS x PSS | -.22 | .17 | -.69 | -1.32 | .192 | -.56 | .11 |
| SES x POS | -.03 | .12 | -.08 | -.25 | .806 | -.27 | .21 |
| SOS x POS | .18 | .16 | .54 | 1.07 | .289 | -.15 | .51 |

### 5.8 Analysis Summary

In this chapter, four main statistical analyses were performed to test the eight hypotheses derived from Research Question 2 to provide a better understanding of how remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern influence employees' psychological well-being in the UK and Malaysia. Turnover intention, which is a second outcome variable was also examined to observe the effects of change on the outcome variable and its association with psychological well-being. The results of this chapter suggest the following:

1. Effects of change

   Positive changes create differences in the psychological well-being of participants who spoke up about workplace issues of concern in both the UK and Malaysia:

   - When there is no change as a result of voice, there is no significant difference in the mean score for psychological well-being and turnover intention compared to when there is no change as a result of silence in both the UK and Malaysia.
   - When there is improvement as a result of voice, the mean score for psychological well-being is higher and the mean score for turnover intention is lower compared to when there is no change as a result of silence in both the UK and Malaysia.

   The results in this section indicate that speaking up in itself does not create a difference in employee psychological well-being. This counters the assumption that voice is 'good'. Higher psychological well-being can only be observed in situations where improvement is perceived by employees. In addition to that, employees also have lower intentions of leaving the organisation when improvement is perceived. The employees who remained silent and experienced no change have significantly lower psychological well-being than those who spoke up and perceived improvement.

2. Silence and voice orientation

   - UK participants remain silent primarily for pro-self reasons.
   - Malaysian participants remain silent for both pro-self and prosocial reasons.
   - UK and Malaysian participants speak up primarily for prosocial reasons.

   The results in this section indicate that silence is generally pro-self whereas voice is prosocial. Although the mean score for pro-self silence is slightly higher than prosocial silence for Malaysia, there is no significant difference between the mean scores for pro-self and prosocial silence suggesting that the participants remain silent to protect themselves and others.

3. Psychological well-being and turnover intention
    - Psychological well-being is negatively related to turnover intention.

    This result indicates that when psychological well-being is high, turnover intention is low. It is important to note from the result in section 1 that psychological well-being and turnover intention are both related to change and not silence nor voice.

4. Moderating effect of perceived support
    - UK participants who perceived lower levels of supervisor support display higher levels of psychological well-being when engaged in higher prosocial silence. Participants who perceived lower levels of organisational support display higher levels of psychological well-being when engaged in higher pro-self silence.
    - There is no significant moderating effect of perceived support on the relationship between employee silence and psychological well-being for the Malaysia sample.

    The results in this section counter the assumption that silence is 'bad' in the UK. When perceived supervisor support is low, there are psychological benefits when engaging in prosocial silence. When perceived organisational support is low, there are psychological benefits when engaging in pro-self silence. The discussion chapter (Chapter 7) will consider this finding in relation to the literature on the effects of perceived breach in the psychological contract for people with different cultural orientation. This serves to understand the possible reasons why similar results were not reflected for the Malaysia sample.

Overall, the results of the statistical analyses counter the assumptions that voice is 'good' and silence is 'bad'. Therefore, voice is not always beneficial and silence is not entirely detrimental. It also provides the context for when voice is 'bad' and silence is 'good'. However, it is crucial to acknowledge from the results that voice leads to more change and this was shown to relate to better psychological well-being and lower turnover intention for the participants in the UK and Malaysia. It is also important to note that a significant percentage of employees from both samples who remained silent did not experience improvements and this was shown to relate to lower psychological well-being and higher turnover intention.

# Chapter 6

## Study 3: Discourse Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the detailed methods and findings for Study 3. I performed a discourse analysis on publicly available online articles published in broadsheet newspapers in the UK and Malaysia. I selected these texts based on a set of selection criteria. The texts cover reports of employees raising workplace issues of concern related to COVID-19 and the valence attached to speaking up versus remaining silent on the concerns.

This study aims to answer the third research question:

*What are the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia?*

By analysing the linguistic techniques used in the texts, I was able to reveal the social values that shaped the employee silence and voice constructs in the UK and Malaysia. These can be categorised into three main discourses:

- Choice
- Change
- Community

As a result of a critical approach to reading, power (Johnstone, 2018) was identified as the underlying discourse that connects these three main discourses. Not only does power influence the choice that one has to exercise voice over silence, but having the power to voice can be used as a tool to effect change. In situations where there is a lack of power over authority figures, widening the audience by reaching out to the community and public to garner support is used as a strategy to gain power, in numbers.

## 6.2 Method

To achieve the second research objective, this study was designed based on the main theme 'Socialisation' from Research Question 1 to further explore the sub-themes. Participants emphasised how social values within their cultures shaped their identity and their choice to remain silent or speak up about matters that were important to the participants. To answer Research Question 3, a Critical Discourse Analysis was performed on five publicly available online articles in the mainstream media, with three texts from the UK and two texts from Malaysia. All the texts relate to reports of employees' attempts to raise workplace issues of concern and reflect the social expectations surrounding silence and voice. The data collection and analytic procedures are presented in the following sections.

### Data Collection

In social constructionism, people develop jointly-constructed understandings of the society that form the basis of shared assumptions of reality and these are communicated through various means. One of the platforms used to communicate these shared assumptions is through the media (Fairclough, 1995), which plays a key role in constructing public belief and social change (Happer & Philo, 2013). Therefore, analysing media language is a way to understand the construction of identities, representations, and relationships within society (Fairclough, 2013). Online articles published by the mainstream media that are freely available were considered as this allows the public to access the materials without payment restrictions, which may result in an extensive reach of the content communicated. The research scope and the following Research Question 3 served as a guide to establish the criteria for text selection to conduct an in-depth text analysis:

*What are the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia?*

As this study was conducted during the first lockdown in both the UK and Malaysia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was factored into the consideration of text selection for three reasons. Firstly, as COVID-19 is a pandemic that affected both the UK and Malaysia, this serves as a common ground where comparisons can be made between the two countries in relation to workforce dynamics in workplaces under similar national crisis affecting social life and the economy. Secondly, this was a period where COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the countries, leading to the lockdown causing major changes in workplaces and in the way people work, which may create situations where the workforce can have very important concerns to raise in their jobs. Lastly, the lockdown for the two countries were only one week apart, which increases the similarity of the situation in relation to period of occurrence for both

countries. It was a conscious decision to sought articles on COVID-related issues of concern in the workplace and on how employee silence and voice were discussed in this context.

I selected the newspapers with the top three highest nationwide coverage in order to focus on the reach of the information published by the media. As the top three newspapers in Malaysia use the English language as a medium of communication, language did not pose as an issue for text analysis and translation was not needed. However, as the top three newspapers in Malaysia were broadsheet newspapers, I decided to also select the top three broadsheet newspapers in the UK instead of the top three newspapers, which would have included tabloids for the UK. I felt that it was important to ensure similarity in the type of newspaper used for both countries as tabloids have a different style of journalism. British tabloids are considered "brash, strident and sensationalist type of newspaper; highly controversial and politically involved" (Johansson, 2007, p. 30) whereas broadsheets are considered more reputable news forms. Although it can be debated that broadsheets are targeted to the 'elites' and may therefore exclude a different audience in the general public, the need for standardisation for comparison purposes outweighs the type of audience that the newspaper is targeted at. Furthermore, I see the advantage of using broadsheets to analyse the language 'as-is' without having to question the linguistic techniques used by tabloid journalists or having to de-sensationalise the language to extract the meaning of the text since there has been much debate about the trustworthiness of tabloid newspapers.

As there were no similar metrics to measure newspaper readership in both countries, I used the method of reporting that was available for each country. Coverage is measured using monthly readership in the UK whereas in Malaysia, coverage is measured using daily circulation. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 present the figures of the coverage for the UK and Malaysia respectively. At the time the research was conducted, the lockdown has been in effect for over four weeks for the UK and five weeks for Malaysia, therefore, four weeks from the time lockdown was announced in both countries was used as the criteria for text search. The period used for Malaysia was 18 March 2020 to 15 April 2020 and for the UK, the period used was 23 March 2020 to 20 April 2020.

**Table 6.1 UK: Monthly readership between January to December 2019**

| News Brand | Total Brand Reach (mil) | Political Orientation |
|---|---|---|
| Independent | 24.6 | Centrist |
| The Guardian | 24.3 | Centre-left |
| The Telegraph | 21.7 | Centre-right |

*Source:* Publishers Audience Measurement Company (PAMCo)

**Table 6.2 Malaysia: Daily circulation over two periods in 2015 and 2018**

| News Brand | Daily circulation | | Political Orientation |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Jul – Dec 2015 | Jul – Dec 2018 | |
| The Star | 366,727 | 151,623 | Centre-right |
| The Sun | 306,249 | n/a* | Centre-left |
| News Straits Times | 58,172 | 30,929 | Centre** |

*Source:* Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC). *n/a – not available. **Declared as neutral from May 2018.

To conduct the text search, various keywords were considered to ensure articles were relevant to the research scope. The keywords used were as per the following:
Keywords 1: covid-19 OR coronavirus AND remain silent OR speak up OR silence OR voice
Keywords 2: staff OR worker OR employee

These keywords were searched using either the newspaper's search tool or google's custom search engine for the duration stated above and appear either in the title or in the text of the article. The search process started with searching keywords 1, followed by inspecting the articles for keywords 2, as well as ensuring relevance to the research scope of speaking up and/or remaining silent about workplace issues of concern. For example, the search results for keywords 1 for The Star newspaper returned 274 articles, then each article were closely inspected for keywords 2. This search process was conducted for all six news brands. The search results returned five online articles, with three for the UK and two for Malaysia (see Appendices 5 to 9). As only a small sample size is required for a Critical Discourse Analysis study that is in-depth in nature (Dick, 2005), five texts were considered sufficient for the analysis. Table 6.3 present the title of the articles found through the text search. Each text is assigned a code to ease the reporting of the analysis. The texts are referred to by the country of origin (UK for United Kingdom and MY for Malaysia), followed by a number in the order of the date the articles were published:

**Table 6.3 Online articles used for the text analysis**

| Code | Text Details |
|---|---|
| UK1 | Title (Date): NHS staff gagged over coronavirus shortages (31 March 2020)<br>Newsbrand: The Guardian<br>Author: Denis Campbell (Health policy editor for Guardian) |
| UK2 | Title (Date): I'm a press officer for NHS staff and I'm disgusted at the way they are being treated (2 April 2020)<br>Newsbrand: Independent<br>Author: Samantha Wathen (Press Officer for Keep Our NHS Public) |
| UK3 | Title (Date): NHS staff forbidden from speaking out publicly about coronavirus (9 April 2020)<br>Newsbrand: The Guardian<br>Author: Sarah Johnson (Guardian journalist) |
| MY1 | Title (Date): Doctors should no longer remain silent (19 March 2020)<br>Newsbrand: The Star<br>Author: Arvin T (Houseman) |
| MY2 | Title (Date): Kota Kinabalu MP – Where are you minister? Time to speak up for workers (23 March 2020)<br>Newsbrand: The Star<br>Author: Stephanie Lee (The Star journalist) |

Analysis

From a social constructionist perspective, language has a permanent role in social life (Fairclough, 2003) and is used as a meaning-making mechanism to communicate human experience (Johnstone, 2018). Therefore, social analysis and research need to take into account language when conducting discourse analysis as language is seen as a social practice. I selected Fairclough's (2003) approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the social values surrounding employee silence and voice as it is a branch of CDA that functions to understand the social effects of discourse by detecting the linguistic manifestations of social conflict in discourses, specifically elements of dominance, difference, and resistance (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This CDA approach takes into consideration power relations, which is a fundamental concept to understanding the power struggle experienced in speaking up about workplace issues of concern (Milliken et al., 2003) and has been suggested as a form of analysis suitable for organisational related studies (Fairclough, 2013).

In Wodak and Meyer's (2009) attempt to present the similarities of the various theoretical approaches of a network of scholars aligned with CDA, there are three general principles that characterises this form of discourse analysis:

- All approaches are problem-oriented, and thus interdisciplinary and eclectic,
- There is the common interest in de-mystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and retroductable investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken, or visual), and
- CDA researchers attempt to make their own positions and interests explicit while retaining their respective scientific methodologies and while remaining self-reflective of their own research process.

Referring to the first principle, CDA combines the approach of engaging with social theory as well as text analysis by focusing on the linguistic features of texts in relation to solving social theoretical issues. It concerns how society is constructed through communication and how society plays a role in reinventing itself through communication. Textual analysis is seen to complement social research in a valuable way and is by no means a replacement for other forms of social research and analysis. From Fairclough's (2003) perspective, CDA has a specific aim and he suggests it to be the following:

*"The aim of critical social research is better understanding of how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and of how the detrimental effects can be mitigated if not eliminated."* (p. 202-203).

This ties in with the objective of this study to explore the social values surrounding employee silence and voice from both a beneficial and detrimental perspective, and how the detrimental effects such as employee's poor psychological well-being and intention to leave their jobs can be prevented from an organisational standpoint. His CDA approach is based on pursuing emancipatory objectives.

In de-mystifying ideologies and power, since language is "a medium of domination and social force" (Habermas, 1967, p. 259), the second principle summarises CDA as an approach that can expose social inequality embedded in texts to "show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance." (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10). Language can therefore be used for different purposes to challenge power, to subvert it, and to change how power is distributed (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Fairclough's (2003) approach of text analysis focuses more on the production of texts. It is due to his understanding of the role

that social agents have in setting up relations between dialectically related elements of social practice through the making of texts (for example, cultural values, social identities, social relations, the means of production, and consciousness) as each social practice has a semiotic element. By approaching texts dynamically, we can reveal ideologies such as cultural values and beliefs as well as power that are often concealed as conceptual metaphors and analogies (Lakoff, 1993).

In keeping to the third principle, I have attempted to make explicit my choice of critical discourse analysis. Scholars have debated as to what the term 'critical' means, as well as whether this is an attempt to exclude researchers who do not employ the term critical in their discourse analysis (Billig, 2008). From my perspective, I see the importance of having a structured and comprehensive way of analysing texts in which Fairclough (2003) has been successful in putting together a strategy to achieve this (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). As such, the term 'critical' in my research is defined as being rigorous in examining the different elements of social practice embedded in the language used in texts to reveal the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia.

Fairclough (2003) provided a set of questions grouped into 12 categories. I selected questions that were relevant to my discourse analysis to interrogate the texts. The checklist of questions selected from the 12 categories is summarised in Table 6.4.

I started the analysis process by reading each text (online articles) three times. I then re-wrote the articles on paper while reflecting on the contents of the texts by putting myself in each author's position to consider their main aim for writing the article. This was then followed by noting down initial understanding of the texts and social values surrounding employee silence and voice for both countries that surfaced from this first set of reading and the writing exercise. After establishing the relevant questions to interrogate the texts (see Table 6.4), I read each text line by line to search for answers to the questions identified in the checklist. The responses were then coded using a theme development procedure similar to the thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2013). Analysis of the text began at a granular more technical level by examining the words used and the structure of the sentences, progressing gradually to broader levels of interpreting words, phrases, and the connection between sentences and clauses, as well as the overall text production purposes. Reporting of the analysis is done on a country level followed by a comparison between countries for each theme.

**Table 6.4 Textual analysis checklist**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Social events | What social event is the text a part of? Is the text part of a chain or network of texts? |
| 2 | Genre | What is the purpose of the text? For example, is it to inform, advise, promise, or warn? |
| 3 | Difference | How is difference presented in the text? Is there an attempt to resolve difference? Is there a focus on commonality or solidarity? |
| 4 | Intertextuality | Are other texts or voices included in the main text? If so, are they attributed? Are the attributed voices directly reported in quotes, or indirectly reported? How are these voices positioned in relation to the authorial voice, and in relation to each other? |
| 5 | Assumptions | What existential, propositional, or value assumptions are made in the text? Are any assumptions ideological? |
| 6 | Semantic/ grammatical relations | What are the main semantic relations between sentences and clauses (consequence, purpose, conditional, additive)? Are there higher-level semantic relations over larger stretches of the text? Are particularly significant relations of equivalence and difference set up in the text? |
| 7 | Exchanges, speech functions and grammatical mood | What are the main types of exchange (activity exchange or knowledge exchange) and speech functions (e.g. statement, question, demand, offer)? Are the statements presented as facts, predictions, hypotheticals, or evaluations? Are there 'metaphorical' relations between exchanges, speech functions, or types of statement (e.g. demands which appear as statements, evaluations which appear as factual statements)? What is the predominant grammatical mood (e.g. declarative, interrogative, imperative)? |
| 8 | Discourses | Are there competing discourses? If not, how are they linked? Are the discourses presented in metaphorical terms? |
| 9 | Representation of social events | What elements of social events are included or excluded?<br>How are social actors represented (activated/passivated, named/classified, specific/generic)? |
| 10 | Styles | What are the styles of the different voices present in the text? To what extent does the linguistic style of the voices present in the text indicate aspects of their identity? |
| 11 | Modality | Is the modality of the text mainly epistemic (concerned with truth), deontic (concerned with obligations to inform) or boulomaic* (concerned with expressing hopes/desires/fears/regret)? What are the authors' level of commitments to the different types of modality (i.e. high, median, low)? |
| 12 | Evaluation | What values do authors commit themselves to? How is their commitment communicated (e.g. explicit/implicit endorsement)? |

*Source:* Adapted from Fairclough (2003) and Gavin (2011). *Adapted from Simpson (1993) as cited by Gavins (2005).

Due to the nature of the texts being newspaper articles, all texts have a generic structure with three main sections: headline, lead paragraph (a summary of the text) and satellite paragraphs (laying out details) (Fairclough, 2003). I will introduce the texts before presenting the full analysis by providing information about the texts that answers questions from category 1 (Social events), category 2 (Genre), and category 11 (Modality) (see Table 6.4 for the full list of questions). The authors' purposes in writing the articles were made clear through the delivery of the different modalities of the texts. All texts have a similar main purpose, which is to reveal serious workplace issues of concern.

UK Texts

There is a combination of all the three modalities across the three UK texts, revealing the purpose of the authors: a) Epistemic – authors are concerned with exposing the truth with regard to the issue of PPE shortages and a lack of testing as well as how staff were being silenced for speaking out locally and publicly, b) Deontic – to inform the public of the unacceptable ways in silencing employees about important workplace issues of concern and therefore the need to hold the NHS organisations and the government accountable, c) Boulomaic – fear that the mishandling of the pandemic will affect the health and safety of the doctors and nurses as well as the public, and hopes that the situation will change for the better.

For UK1, the purpose of the text is to inform the public about the issues happening within the NHS, the UK's public health service. The text highlights the unacceptable measures taken by the management in hospitals and NHS bodies to prevent doctors and nurses from speaking up and out about the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the fear that the doctors and nurses were put through to ensure that they comply. It also seeks to inform the public that the ministers and NHS bosses have not kept their promise of ensuring adequate supply of PPEs to hospitals.

For UK2, the purpose of the text is to defend the NHS staff, who the author refers to as her "colleagues", an explicit identification as an in-group of the medical community and for the author to inform the public about the issues happening within the NHS. The details provided are based on what she has been directly informed by the NHS staff. The text serves to inform the public about two things. First, it is to inform about the unacceptable actions taken by the government (in particular the NHS management) to prevent NHS staff from speaking up and out about PPE and testing concerns. Second, it is to inform about poor working conditions that the frontline staff are experiencing.

For UK3, the author, Sarah Johnson referred to article UK1 (NHS staff gagged over coronavirus shortages), written by Dennis Campbell, health policy editor for the Guardian published in the Guardian on 31 March 2020. This was done to highlight how authorities from hospitals and NHS bodies prevented doctors and nurses from speaking out as well as the tactics used to make them comply. The purpose of the text is to further expose to the public about the unacceptable measures taken by the management of NHS Trusts to prevent staff from speaking up and out about their concerns through the statement "the Guardian can reveal". The connection made also implies that Sarah Johnson has written the article to reinforce the message that Dennis Campbell has put forward. The fact that the authors have written the articles, it is a personal endorsement as well as the newspapers' endorsements of the unacceptability of the situation adding weight to their claim and argument.

MY Texts

For MY1, there is a mix of all the different modalities: 1) Epistemic – the author is concerned with exposing the truth of the matter with regard to the issue of oversupply of housemen – he is in a way giving insider information to the public who are unaware of the daily realities of the medical community and in how they are being treated, 2) Deontic – informing the public of the facts by substantiating that with figures, and 3) Boulomaic – concerned with hopes and desires for a better country led by competent leaders as well as wanting better employment packages and working conditions.

The author of MY1 referred to the letter written by a contract officer, "Contract officers get short end of the stick", that was featured in the Letters section of the same newspaper a day earlier. This was done to share the sentiment felt by contract officers about their employment conditions. The text has three purposes. First, the author is writing to voice his discontent with how the Malaysian government has treated housemen and doctors, which is a community he is a part of (in-group). Second, it is to inform the public about misinformation by the Malaysian government on the oversupply of housemen by contrasting the doctor-patient ratio given by the Malaysian Health ministry with the ideal ratio communicated by the World Health Organisation. Third, the author wants to recommend a way to resolve the issue of a nationwide shortage of doctors. Therefore, the author is speaking for himself and others. The mention of the letter published by the contract officer a day earlier serves to strengthen the voice of the contract officer by providing further information within the text about the day-to-day realities of doctors from being a student until they are fully qualified to work. The author introduced the voice of the Health Ministry and World Health Organisation (WHO) indirectly in the form of data (doctor-patient ratio) provided by these two bodies. The author has the intention to correct the Malaysian government's claim of oversupply of housemen by contrasting the ratio given

by the Health Ministry versus the ideal ratio provided by a reputable global organisation in the health sector.

For MY2, the modality in the text is deontic in nature. The author positions the content of the text through the voice of the Kota Kinabalu Member of Parliament to inform the public of the law that exists to protect the employees who spoke up about being forced to take unpaid leave as well as to inform the employers.

This text serves to report on the issue of workers in Sabah being forced to take unpaid leave. The text has two purposes. The primary purpose is to inform workers about the State Labour Ordinance (SLO) that protects Sabah workers' rights, especially those whose income was affected by the MCO. The secondary purpose is to expose the Human Resources Minister regarding his neglect in providing information to the workers about the law that protects them.

In the following three sections, I will first present the text analysis at a country level followed by a comparison between the two countries for each discourse to outline the similarities and differences.

### 6.3 Choice

The language used in the texts for both countries emphasises on the duality of silence and voice. For first-person narrative texts, the authors presented the power dynamics between the different actors metaphorically. The use of this technique illustrates the relationship and the unequal power that the opposing actors possess, as well as each author's sentiment on the issue of concern. The expectation attached to choice in exercising voice over silence can be explored through examining the representation of the act of speaking up and remaining silent. The explicit and implicit associations made between silence and voice and one's job role reveal the moral dimensions of speaking up and remaining silent about workplace issues of concern.

<u>UK Texts</u>

***Speaking up is not an option, remaining silent is imposed***

The predominant grammatical mood for the UK texts is declarative, with an evaluative statement that follows each title to provide a summary of the focus of the text. In UK1, the title: "NHS staff 'gagged' over coronavirus shortages" had the order of grammatical elements in declarative sentences with "NHS staff" as the subject and was made the focus of the text by the verb "gagged" describing the action that forms the main part of the predicate of the

sentence. The title was immediately supplemented by a statement to explain the term “gagged” as being “warned not to discuss”, which refers to the act of silencing the doctors and nurses, who are the NHS staff, by an actor excluded from the statement. The exclusion appears to demand the reader to question the “who”, positioning the excluded actor as the antagonist in the article.

The title functions in two ways. First, the act of speaking up about coronavirus shortages is the right thing to do and second, that the act of silencing the person speaking up is thereby wrong. The verb “gagged” carries an implicit meaning to suggest that the actor is a person in a position of power over the NHS staff. The act of gagging provides a visualisation of a person in captivity who is forcefully restrained from calling for help by the captor using an item such as a piece of cloth to silent the wearer. This does not only portray the excluded actor as the antagonist but also that their way of silencing the protagonists is “unacceptable” and can be considered a “criminal offence”.

This is similar to UK3 with the title: “NHS staff forbidden from speaking out publicly about coronavirus”, with “forbidden” as the verb in the sentence that describes an order given by an actor in a position of power to prohibit the protagonists, the “NHS staff” from speaking out publicly. The statement that follows the title, “Draconian measures prevent some healthcare professions discussing their work during the pandemic” is, in fact, an evaluation of the antagonist, introduced as the hospital management and NHS bodies within the text on their excessively harsh and unreasonable actions put in place to silence the NHS staff. As presented by the authors, this is in part due to the severity of the issue of concern as it can have an impact on public safety, as well as the timing of the event occurring during a global pandemic experienced as a “national crisis”.

In all the texts, the authors used words that carry negative connotations such as “gag”, “forbid”, “warned”, “threatened”, “clampdown”, “blocked”, “banned”, and “imposed” to describe the act of silencing the NHS staff who chose to speak up about the lack of protective equipment and testing. This sends out a clear and consistent message that the act of silencing the NHS staff is a heinous act. In UK2, the verb “burned” was used to describe how NHS staff were treated for voicing out their concerns. This illustrates a setting in the Middle Ages, where those accused of medieval witchcraft were punished and put to death through execution by burning at the stake. This again reinforces the point on power difference where the government is seen acting from a position of authority and has misused its power. The author further emphasises the lack of power that the NHS staff has through the use of hierarchy by describing the government as being at the “top”. The power misuse was expressed through the adverb “justly”

that was attached to the act of speaking out. This implies that the NHS staff were wrongly accused and punished as the issue that they spoke up about were done with the safety of the public in mind. “Justly” not only portrays the act of speaking up as morally right on the basis that it was well-founded but functions to make this explicit to the reader.

***Speaking up is an employee obligation, listening is an employer obligation***

An attributed direct voice in UK1, Dr Samantha Batt-Rawden, the President of The Doctor’s Association UK (DAUK) used the term “moral duty” to refer to the act of speaking up. In unpacking this term, “moral” pertains to the distinction between right and wrong, and “duty” refers to an obligation or job (OED, 2020). Here, it implies that it is the doctor’s job and obligation to speak up about matters concerning public safety, a life and death situation. The act of speaking up is directly linked to a doctor’s profession rendering voice an expectation and the default option as it is implying that the doctors are carrying out their jobs by speaking up. This is similar to UK2 where the author who introduced herself as the press officer for a major NHS campaigning organisation puts forward “relaying their [NHS staff] messages to the public” or “speaking out” as being their “job”, therefore an expected action that should not be questioned.

In UK3, remaining silent was perceived by a mental health professional as an “unspoken rule” imposed by the NHS organisation. It was put forward that the management’s expectation of the staff is to “keep their heads down, follow orders and say nothing”. Here, there appears to be a violation of the psychological contract as the mental health professional stated that there exists a separate set of unwritten rules (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) contrary to their belief and understanding that speaking up is the right thing to do. Having the awareness of the power imbalance between the NHS staff and the hospital management, the mental health professional implies that the management’s behaviour towards staff induces fear forcing them to adhere to the “unspoken rule”: “When it comes to the day-to-day clinical issues and challenges we face, there is a definite power dynamic at play, and [we] are generally petrified to speak out”.

The emphasis on speaking up as being the right thing to do is also evident in UK2. In this text, the author positions the act of speaking up as being desirable and worthy of respect by using the adjectives “brave” and “selfless”. The adjective “brave” was further elevated by using the adverb “incredibly” to emphasise the word and in turn, the message the author is wanting to deliver. According to Benamara et. al. (2007), “incredibly” is classed as a strong intensifying adverb that when combined with an adjective, known as adverb-adjective combinations (AACs), exhibits the strength of opinion expressed about a topic and produces a high

recollection of the sentiment. This also presents the act of speaking up as being positive and commendable. It is evident through the author's metaphorical representation of doctors and nurses as soldiers using war terminologies such as "frontline" and how they were being sent into "battle with no armour" signify the importance of their profession and the danger that they experience during this pandemic. Choosing to speak up is not only described as the right thing to do but that speaking up at such a time is seen to require additional "risks" due to the element of fear induced by the NHS organisations and therefore needs to be acknowledged.

In emphasising the importance of the voices of doctors and nurses during this period, the author of UK2 used the expression "the canaries in this unexplored mine" to describe the doctors and nurses as "canaries" and equating the pandemic to the "unexplored mine". The original expression "canary in the coal mine" has a historical significance in British mining dating back to 1911 where canaries were used to detect carbon monoxide and other toxic gases as these birds are more sensitive than humans to toxic gases (BBC, 1986). In the sentence that follows, "when they make a noise, it is our responsibility to listen", the author is indirectly suggesting an assumed dyadic relationship between the government and the NHS staff, each having their respective roles. Not only is speaking up the duty or rather the job of doctors and nurses but if a voice is raised, it is the job of the government to listen. Not listening to the doctors and nurses implies putting lives at risk and can lead to grave consequences. Listening is therefore also not a choice, but the expected role of the government.

***Summary UK***

In analysing the UK texts, speaking up is not an option when the employers are oppressive. There are high risks associated with speaking up about workplace issues of concern that reflects the oppression experienced by the employees. Since speaking up is a moral obligation that is perceived to be part of one's job, those who proceeded to speak up even under such circumstances are highly respected.

MY Texts

***Remaining silent should not be an option, speaking up is the only alternative***

The discourse on choice is first evident in the title of MY1: "Doctors should no longer remain silent". The declarative grammatical mood with "should" as the verb indicates an obligation and expected behaviour on the part of the subject, the "doctors". This sentence suggests that the act of remaining silent must be brought to an end. The statement immediately appears to disapprove silence and presents speaking up as the "right" action to take.

With regard to self-identification, the author introduces himself as “a doctor in the making”. It was not made explicit as to which specific group the author belongs to but there is a suggestion that the author is not yet a fully qualified doctor, a houseman undergoing training in a hospital. In presenting the struggles of the medical community, the author discerns the different levels of hierarchy whilst merging the various groups as an “in-group” by referring to “contract officers”, “housemen”, “specialists”, “medical officers, and “allied healthcare staff” as “doctors”.

In a subsequent paragraph, the author perceived that doctors are seen as “tools” by their “owners” who are the politicians governing the country. The phrases “pulled out” and “roped in” describe the differences in power between the doctors and the government. The act of “pulling” represents that being called to service was not made a choice but the government’s requirement for retired doctors to “help with the treatments efforts” related to the COVID-19 outbreak. The government is perceived to “summon” doctors as they please, akin to “slaves” with ropes around their neck. The government treating doctors as “dispensable” implies that the government views doctors as being easily replaceable and is valued only on a needs-basis.

There were other instances where the author expressed how doctors are viewed by the government as a specific type of object, “goods”. The use of the word “oversupply” can be linked to the supply and demand model in economics. It is more commonly explained using the labour process theory in industrial capitalism in which labour-power is viewed as a commodity in a gig economy where organisations hire staff temporarily to meet the demands of work (Gandini, 2019). An oversupply of doctors denotes that the government assumed that there were too many goods in stock and is incurring unnecessary inventory cost to the government hence doctors are removed when the demands of work have been met. All these are indications that the power lies in the hands of the politicians. Doctors do not have any decision-making power as they are seen as inventories. When doctors are not heard, they feel like “objects” or “things” that can be thrown away as and when the “owner” feels that they are no longer of any value. The author’s point on doctors as “human beings with livelihoods, emotions and families” appear to serve as a reinforcement that the author feels that the government is treating doctors like objects and that he does not want doctors to be seen as “things”.

The idea that doctors can be “pulled out” of retirement underlines the fact that they do not have the luxury of choice. It also illustrates how doctors do not get the respect and appreciation that they rightly deserve for serving humanity. The amount of suffering that doctors are put through seem to be equated to the amount of respect and appreciation that doctors should be

accorded. The more suffering that one endures, the more respect and appreciation that they deserve. The element of saving lives was brought in to make a comparison between doctors speaking up to improve their working conditions versus remaining silent to “save lives”. Here, saving lives is not an option as it is an obvious moral thing to do. Self is therefore neglected rightfully for the greater good.

***Speaking up is an employee obligation, remaining silent is being uncaring***

The moral dimension of speaking up is evident in MY2 where speaking up is seen as synonymous to “caring”. In the context of MY2, the issue of concern involves workers who the Human Resources Minister has a responsibility to “care for” that suffered as a result of their employer’s unfair treatment that is against the law during the Movement Control Order (MCO). MCO is a cordon sanitaire implemented by the federal government of Malaysia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The attributed direct voice of the Kota Kinabalu Member of Parliament (MP), Chan Foong Hin in his question “Does Saravanan not care about workers?” implies that the job as a Human Resources Minister is to care for and protect workers. This emphasises the view that speaking up is seen as performing one’s job.

In both texts, silence is portrayed as the leading cause of suffering hence represented as a negative act. In MY1, being ignored by the government is the cause of doctors’ suffering whereas, in MY2, not speaking up on the part of the government is the cause of the workers suffering. The two texts outline the need for the government to be “attentive” to the voice of workers. This perception is based on the inactions of the government in addressing the issues of concern. From the way Chan Foong Hin has presented the case in MY1, any reason that Saravanan may give as to why he has not spoken up is seen to be an excuse. There appears to be no reason why a Human Resources Minister would choose not to speak up for the workers as it is seen to be part of a Minister's job.

In presenting Chan Foong Hin’s voice in opposition to Saravanan’s voice through this statement, “An MP has ticked off the Human Resources Minister for keeping quiet”, the author is introducing a power dynamic to reinforce the wrongdoing of Saravanan, the Human Resources Minister. An additional layer that is visible only to readers who are aware of the Malaysian political situation is the identity of Chan Foong Hin as a member of the Democratic Action Party, an opposition party in Malaysia. The MP’s voice is positioned in a way to serve as a check and balance to the ruling government by calling out and making the government accountable for their inactions, which is an MP’s duty. By providing information about the law to the workers (and employers) and cautioning employers in how they treat their workers, the

MP can be seen to be walking the talk and performing his job, which is to speak up when issues of concern arise.

***Summary MY***

In analysing the Malaysia texts, remaining silent about the government's oppressive actions was put forward as unreasonable and hence not an option. The amount of suffering over the years and the continual disregard by the government serve as legitimate reasons to speak up about the oppression. Speaking up is perceived to be part of one's job. It is associated with being responsible and caring for others particularly for people in positions of power.

Between-Country Comparison

In introducing the actors across all texts in both countries, it was apparent that there is unequal power depending on which level the actor is in the hierarchy. The way silence and voice are viewed becomes the result of how the actors are involved in different contexts. However, there is a consensus that voice is a positive act and silence is a negative act. In the UK, the NHS organisations and the government are positioned as the antagonists as they tried to silence the NHS staff from speaking up about issues of concern that are related to public safety. In Malaysia, the government remaining silent about workers' concerns and not listening to the doctors' voices are viewed negatively. Voice is encouraged and silence is discouraged.

There is also an expectation for employees to act in good faith. In the context of the pandemic in the UK, public safety is considered a very important issue of concern to the beneficiaries of the NHS service. Doctors and nurses have been entrusted to raise and act on those concerns. There is the element of service above self in that NHS staff have gone to great extents to make their concerns heard, risking their jobs and livelihoods to ensure public safety. Speaking up is regarded as a courageous and selfless act that involves self-sacrifice. Employees who suffer in silence are choosing to remain silent only to protect themselves from negative consequences. In Malaysia, there is also the element of "service above self", however, this comes from the perspective of employees remaining silent and putting aside self-interest to focus on saving lives during the pandemic. Therefore, remaining silent is perceived not to be an employee's primary choice but is done for the greater good.

For both countries, speaking up is regarded as the "right" thing to do. This presents voice as the default option and an expected course of action when workplace issues arise. Furthermore, as speaking up about concerns is represented as carrying out one's duty, remaining silent implies that an employee is not performing their job. If remaining silent about workplace issues of concern is a personal choice, it is regarded as employees consciously choosing not to

perform their job leading to a possible element of guilt in employees or negative reaction from others. However, if remaining silent about workplace issues of concern is imposed by another actor other than the employees themselves, that particular actor is preventing the employee from performing their job and hence should be held accountable.

### 6.4 Change

In analysing the way the authors present the silence and voice constructs, as well as the power dynamics of the actors involved, the discourse on change can be examined to reveal who the drivers of change are in a less than ideal societal context.

UK Texts

***The employees who speak up are driving change***

The UK2 title: "I'm a press officer for NHS staff and I'm disgusted at the way they are being treated" is an evaluative statement of the government's action to silence NHS staff from speaking out about their concerns. In different sections of the text, there are accounts of the numerous ways in which NHS staff have been silenced by the government. The author used strong intensifying words such as "disgusted", "dangerously slow", and "burned" to evoke negative emotions from the readers towards the government. Negative inducements such as feelings of anger, urgency or threat have been shown to motivate people to drive change (Dittmar, 2020).

The conjunction "and" in the title adds weight to the author's evaluation of the government by emphasising herself as a press officer for a "major" NHS campaigning organisation. A press officer's job role was further elaborated in the subsequent paragraph that functions to establish the identity of the authorial voice, presented as a credible person and an in-group of the medical community that the readers can trust. Having only the second half of the title "I'm disgusted at the way they are being treated" may not achieve the same effect if the "I" was not explicitly introduced. It was also important that the author made an explicit introduction of their identity as the word "disgusted" is not commonly used by a press officer to express sentiments about issues in a professional context. Therefore, the word choice indicates the seriousness of the matter in addition to getting the reader's attention.

***The employers are impeding change***

In describing the way that doctors and nurses were treated, there is a form of behaviour "policing" within the NHS organisations. In UK1, the Southend Hospital in Essex referred to

the “disciplinary policy” in a memo when expressing disapproval over the posting of photographs and social media commentaries by the A&E staff. Maintaining professionalism and good public image were reasons used as to why the A&E staff should not speak out publicly about PPE shortages as well as engage with the media about their work. There is an assumption made by the hospital that posting photographs of staff in uniforms not complying with IPC [infection prevention and control] would “damage” their professional image in the eye of the public and “undermine” the respect that the public has for them. Not providing the evidence to substantiate these claims result in a questionable statement. Furthermore, it was not stated whether the memo is an excerpt or a full statement hence “inappropriate social media commentary” comes across as being subjective. This can create fear and anxiety in staff as to what is considered appropriate or inappropriate since the explanation was not provided by the hospital. Arguments on the “fairness” of the disciplinary actions taken against NHS staff may arise. The author’s use of this indirect attributed voice appears to suggest that the NHS organisations are using “professional image” and “respect from the public” as justifications to prevent employees from speaking out about their concerns. This results in a form of “legitimate silencing” where NHS organisations can subject staff to disciplinary actions based on the subjective reason outlined in the memo. In UK2, the author claims that the government is legitimately silencing staff as a form of “cover-up” to prevent the government from being seen as incompetent due to the mishandling of the pandemic.

The memo sent out by the Southend Hospital indicates the power that the NHS management has in “controlling” the behaviour of the staff who express dissent. NHS staff are projected as not knowing how to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and therefore needing “discipline”. This paints the NHS staff as being incapable of acting reasonably as speaking out about PPE shortages is not in accordance to the guidelines of what “good behaviour” looks like from the perspective of the hospital management. The “us” and “them” divide becomes a legitimate reason for the hospital management to create guidelines and enforce rules that ultimately benefits the management. Staff, on the other hand, are required to abide by the rules and suppress their voices without the opportunity to engage in making decisions nor influence policies.

This was also evident in UK3 when a nurse expressed his sense of powerlessness after receiving a “cold” response from the communications department on the ban of public communication. The absence of opportunity to negotiate and put forward his views was a “shock” to his reality as he has always felt a sense of job security being a healthcare worker until the interaction that he had with the communications department that made him feel “threatened”. Although doctors and nurses are commonly grouped as “NHS staff”, there exists

a power difference between the two supposed in-groups of doctors and nurses in using their voice as a tool to drive change. The texts highlight the power that doctors have over nurses by providing an example of how doctors can engage with the press as they were “less likely to be challenged or threatened”.

In further analysing the way the three authors have framed the NHS staff’s concerns, it appears that the NHS organisations have reversed the role of the victim and offender by assuming the role of a victim to deflect blame. The primary reasons put forward on why NHS staff are experiencing fear were: a) receiving threatening emails, b) invasion of privacy through the monitoring of personal social media accounts, and c) disciplinary actions carried out based on unfair reasons. These are instances of bullying behaviours (Carter et al., 2013) and indicate that the NHS staff are victims of workplace bullying. The NHS organisation’s attempt to switch their role from being an offender to a victim is evident from the reframing of the NHS staff’s version of the events. The NHS organisation tried to achieve this outcome by using the idea of NHS staff tarnishing the professionalism and good public image of NHS as well as undermining the respect from the public to make the victims appear to be responsible for the bullying. In the sociological field, this is a common strategy that offenders use when being held accountable for their behaviour known as ‘Reverse Victim and Offender’ (Harsey & Freyd, 2020) that functions to cast doubt onto the credibility of the victims (McDonald et al., 2010).

***Summary UK***

The evidence presented by the authors suggests a violation of the ideal functioning of the healthcare system hence the need to expose the actions of the NHS organisations and the government in how they misuse power to maintain their status. The extent that the NHS organisations and the government have gone in silencing the employees have fuelled anger and invoked emotions in the authors. As a result of that, the authors are driving change by gathering evidence and writing the articles to reveal the truth of the matter. In so doing, the government is held accountable and is responsible for making change happen.

<u>MY Texts</u>

***The employees are responsible in pushing for change***

The MY1 text appears to suggest that doctors have been remaining silent about workplace issues of concern for an extended period. This was first evident in the title “Doctors should no longer remain silent”. Although there were indications within the text that doctors have tried speaking up by “asking” for better working conditions and employment packages “for decades”, the author does not seem to consider “asking” as “speaking up”. This suggests that there is a

specific definition attached to the term “speaking up”. As the “request” for “humane working hours and a reasonable salary” was not met, the author indirectly equates the act of “speaking up” to “achieving the desired outcome”. This implies that the result outweighs the effort to drive change, and not having achieved the desired outcome does not count as having spoken up.

For both texts, the government was seen to disregard employees’ concerns. In MY1, the government “ignored” the concerns raised by the doctors in this statement, “our pleas have constantly fallen on deaf ears” whereas in MY2, the Human Resources Minister appear to be “hiding” based on the interrogative title “Where are you Minister?”. These statements highlight the absence of the government and the lack of support provided to workers. Not being heard and supported are perceived to be a show of “no respect, care, and appreciation” for the employees.

***The employers are obstructing change***

In achieving the desired outcome that the doctors are seeking for, in the MY1 context, the government was perceived to be the “problem” or “obstacle” that needs to be “removed” to allow change and improvements to happen. The author’s proposal to “solve” the problem by getting rid of the politicians suggest that the country is unable to change in a positive way due to the power that the politicians have over the doctors. The suggestion for a conditional employment contract is telling of the “frustration” that the author felt as there appears to be no solution other than to remove the obstacle or “reduce” the power that the politicians have. The performance-based employment contract put forward by the author suggests that the “job security” of the politicians led them to being complacent. The use of the adjective “incompetent” to describe the government implies that there is an expectation that being “the government” is synonymous to being “competent”. Furthermore, the expression “give them a taste of their own medicine” to refer to implementing a fixed-term performance-based contract for politicians assumes that “job insecurity” will result in a competent government that empathises and understands the hardship that the doctors experience.

The lack of empathy on the part of the government displays the politicians as being “inhumane”. This is similar to MY2 where the emotion “caring” was attached to the act of speaking up. The Human Resources Minister “hiding” or remaining silent suggests that the minister does not care about the workers, lacking emotions that are crucial in performing his job. The representation of the government as “obstacles” and being “emotionless” further displays the government as being “object-like” and an entity that merely exists as it does not serve its intended purpose of listening to people and effecting change. Therefore, the responsibility in

making change happen falls on employees and the community to remove the “object” that is obstructing change.

***Summary MY***

The evidence presented by the authors suggest that the government is not doing their job in effecting change. There is the need to continuously speak up to get heard. The authors are driving change by writing the articles to reveal the extent as to how irresponsible the government is. In so doing, the government is held accountable and needs to be removed if change does not happen.

Between-Country Comparison

For both countries, frustrations of not being heard are expressed through the varying tones and use of language. In the UK, words are accentuated for two reasons: a) to prevent misinterpretation of the situation, for example, the use of the word “legitimate” to describe the concerns raised and the word “normal” to describe the communication channels used to air employees’ concerns, b) to amplify the concerns to get heard where there appears to be a need to “shout” about workplace issues of concern to “grab” the intended recipient’s attention. In Malaysia, the frustrations are felt through the radical solutions proposed to effect change as well as the interrogative stance taken in the style of questioning the authority.

There is a contrasting difference in the way actors are represented in each country. For the UK, the actors are represented as having interactions with one another and are actively pursuing redress. Employees are actively and continuously speaking up about their concerns whereas the NHS organisations and the government are actively silencing employees. For Malaysia, the employees and the government are represented in a passive manner and in many instances akin to “objects” that do not have emotions. Employees perceive to be treated as “objects” by people in positions of power whereas the government is passive in handling employees’ voices by way of “ignoring” the issues and “hiding” or neglecting their responsibility. There is an absence of interaction between the two opposing actors.

The active and passive stance reveal where the responsibility lies in using voice as a tool to effect change and which actors are accountable in making change happen. In the UK, it was clear through the authors’ actions in writing the articles that the responsibility to drive change lies on the employees and the wider community to put pressure on the NHS organisations and the government as a way of holding them accountable for their actions in silencing the NHS staff. In Malaysia, as the government is viewed as being non-responsive, the responsibility

and accountability in effecting change lies in the employees to question and remove the people in positions of power for change to happen.

For both countries, speaking up is seen as the way to improve the situation and for positive change to happen. An examination of the power dynamics between the actors exposes the struggles that employees face in raising concerns and driving change. People in positions of power are regarded as the problem, and the drivers of change are the employees and the wider community. People in positions of power who do not address workers' concerns are projected as being incompetent and specifically, in the UK, there is a need for the government to want to be seen as competent hence "turning the table" when being held accountable for not addressing concerns raised by the NHS staff. Change can only happen by holding the people in positions of power accountable. For Malaysia, the removal of the authority is perceived to be the only way that situations can improve. In an ideal societal context where all actors are performing their job roles, change is perceived to take place without special intervention through the expected procedure of employees raising their concerns and the management addressing those concerns.

### 6.5 Community

Time is represented to indicate the threshold of when issues of concern are taken further to the wider community. Analysing the semantic relations between the main sections of the texts reveal the power that the community has in using their collective voice to effect change.

<u>UK Texts</u>

***The threshold for speaking up is determined by the voice process***

All three articles serve to amplify the voices of the NHS staff who were treated unfairly and who are suffering in silence out of fear of negative consequences should they speak up. The articles are prosocial, where the authors are speaking up in solidarity with the medical community whose voices have been silenced. The contents of the articles serve to reach out to the wider community to hold the government accountable.

In analysing this sentence in UK1: "Doctors have a moral duty to make their concerns regarding Covid-19 public if these cannot be resolved locally", the semantic relations between clauses reveal a condition for how matters should be raised and when they should be taken to the public. The conjunction "if" serves as a condition that doctors "should" resolve matters locally before those concerns can be taken further to the public. The use of Dr Samantha Batt-Rawden's voice within the text highlights a standard operating procedure of raising concerns

at two levels; first, at an internal level within the NHS organisation and second, at an external level to the public. This implies that it is not a standard route to take matters directly to the public where doctors are expected to first resolve matters locally. Although it was not explained as to what "local" is, the text implies the NHS organisations where staff are based at, as examples were given on how doctors "had their careers threatened" and were "sent home from work", which are actions that can typically be taken only by the management that the doctors are reporting to within the NHS organisation that they are based at.

Dr Samantha Batt-Rawden's voice also serves to justify the need to take matters to the public as the NHS staff have tried to resolve the issues internally. As the term "moral duty" was used in the sentence to indicate a moral obligation rather than a legally binding obligation, taking matters to the public is more of a "socially expected" operating procedure that doctors should follow rather than a "standard" operating procedure that is endorsed and implemented by the NHS organisation or the government.

The author of UK2 also made a similar comment and endorses the "socially expected" operating procedure by stating that "the government has not been listening to healthcare staff through the normal communication channels and they are proving dangerously slow to react to what NHS staff are telling them". Therefore, taking matters to the public is seen as the only way to "pressure" the government to act on the concerns. The word "pressure" indicates that the public has power over the government. The author supported the idea of the "power of the people" by providing an example of a "petition for free staff parking" created by "concerned members of the public" where "Johnson and co have had to concede".

***The community strengthens the power of the employee voice***

With the authors' awareness of the "power of the people", evidence was used within the texts to function in a way as to convince the wider community of the severity of the issue and to gain support for action. The evidence support claims of NHS staff being gagged and "reveal" information that the public may not be privy to as outsiders (people outside of this bubble) who are not part of the medical community. Across the texts, the satellite paragraphs serve to provide specific examples while ensuring anonymity on how doctors and nurses were treated when they raised their concerns about PPE shortages publicly. In UK1, the evidence was in the form of five testimonies that were given by doctors to DAUK, in UK2, the author relayed the stories told to her by the NHS staff, and in UK3, the Guardian provided five cases that they were aware of where NHS staff have been silenced. These incidents are in addition to the ones that were elaborated within the texts. The authors used quantity to substantiate the

claims. This can be seen as a way to emphasise that this is not a one-off incident but a severe continuous one that cannot be dismissed or “swept under the carpet”.

To further support the authorial voice that the NHS organisations are silencing NHS staff, attributed voices of various professionals from reputable organisations were directly reported in quotes in UK3 such as Colenzo Jarrett-Thorpe (National Officer for Health at the Unite union), a spokesman from the Institute of Biomedical Science, and Roger Kline (Research Fellow at Middlesex University). In including the different voices within the text, the Guardian newspaper takes the stance of an information provider by “revealing” information that the public would be “interested” to know. The authors’ fact-finding and revealing exercise work based on the assumption that the text would reach readers who are part of the taxpayer community and since NHS is a publicly-funded service, these issues would be of interest to the readers and would invoke readers to want to hold the government accountable.

***Summary UK***

For the UK, there is the expectation that concerns should first be raised to the local management. If the local management fails to address the issues raised, the issues are then taken externally to the wider medical community. As the concerns affect the people in the country, if the management continues to fail to address the issues raised, the issues are then taken publicly. The purposes of making the issues known publicly are to give voice to the employees and to hold the NHS organisation and government accountable to effect change.

MY Texts

***The threshold for speaking up is determined by the suffering endured***

The title of MY1 indicates that matters have gone beyond the threshold of what is considered acceptable and that there is a case for doctors to speak up about their concerns. The title is a call for the community of doctors to speak up and demand change to happen. In this paragraph, “We pledge our lives to the service of humanity and endure humiliation and abuse through medical school and later housemanship to finally end up in the jaws of an incompetent government”, the use of the conjunction “and” multiple times is used to show the collective amount of suffering the doctors have gone through over the years that did not seem to be worthwhile as the result of it all is that they “finally end up” under the leadership of a group of incompetent politicians running the country. This, therefore, serves as a justified reason why doctors should no longer remain silent, as they have been suffering in silence for far too long.

***The threshold for speaking up is determined by its timeliness***

The title of MY2 has an indication of the threshold on when the "right time" is to speak up. The MP indicated that the Minister "should have" spoken up and "at least" provided information about the law that protects workers at the start of the MCO, which was before any issue surfaced. After the issue has surfaced, there is an expectation that the Minister would "unquestionably" speak up and clarify the issue but when this expectation was not met, the Minister would need to be held accountable. The MP's act of calling out the Minister is in a way advocating for what he believes in, which is to speak up for the people who are beneficiaries of his service. This can be considered an explicit endorsement to the value that he is committed to. The differences of power between the employer and employee is resolved by using the power of knowledge and law that was explained by the Kota Kinabalu MP. In so doing, the workers who were treated unfairly by being "forced to take unpaid leave" gained power to be able to negotiate terms with their employer.

***The community as a collective voice is the highest form of power***

The MY1 author suggests that the only way that the problems can be solved is if doctors "no longer remain silent", and that they start speaking up about the problems. However, the author did not outline in specific terms how doctors can or should speak up, the author only suggested that the incompetent politicians should be removed. Here, the "solution" is for doctors to speak up and the "problem" is the incompetent politicians governing the country, without details as to how the problem can be solved nor who would implement such changes. This positions the text to appear as though the author is using it as an avenue to vent his frustration hoping that the medical community and the wider community would pick the story up and do their part to drive the change. There is an attempt to remind the wider community of the "power of the people" when the author presented his proposal to evaluate politicians based on their performance and removing politicians who under-performs.

***Summary MY***

For Malaysia, 'requests' are positioned as serious concerns if change does not happen. After enduring suffering for a prolonged period of time without change happening, concerns are then taken to the community and public to call for action to remove the people in positions of power. The medical community as a collective and the citizens are regarded as having the highest authority in taking actions against the complacent politicians governing the country.

<u>Between-Country Comparison</u>

For both countries, the articles are prosocial in nature where the authors seek to widen the audience on behalf of the employees who were silenced to provide the reader with information

and to call out to the community for action. The authors are well aware of the power that the public has and in writing the article, present convincing facts to express their sentiments to invoke emotions in the reader.

For the UK, there appears to be a threshold in the form of a “socially expected” operating procedure of how and when there is a need to reach out to the wider community. There is reason to believe that the UK texts are interconnected, with UK2 and UK3 written with knowledge of the previous articles published as the contents are similar. There is evidence of the usage of the same verbs such as “gag” to describe the act of silencing by the NHS organisations and the government. UK3 referred to UK1, therefore, the two texts are explicitly connected with UK3 reinforcing the message of UK1.

For Malaysia, there is a threshold as to when silencing by the authority is considered “acceptable” and when it is “unacceptable”. The silencing is unacceptable when suffering for a prolonged period is involved especially if there is collective suffering by a large number of people within a community. Requests for change that were ignored are then positioned as serious concerns raised to the wider community and the public to call for change.

Selecting and publishing the MY1 letter is an implicit endorsement of the newspaper on the issue. For MY2, the author positioned the MP as the primary voice within the text that appears to detract focus from the author. As The Star newspaper is owned by MCA, a right-wing political party, an explicit endorsement may not be possible. It is different for the UK where the newspapers are centre-left leaning towards being liberal and therefore may be more likely to carry a tone that is reflective of how the authors felt. The authors may be more likely to express their opinions without having to worry about “offending” the NHS organisations and the right-wing government as the newspaper companies are independent of them and are not subject to any form of subordination.

Overall, all texts serve to outline that the authors and readers are within the same wider community and that everyone within the community has an obligation to look out for one another by speaking out on unfair treatments and issues that concern the public.

### 6.6 Analysis Summary

A discourse analysis on five newspaper articles in the UK and Malaysia reveal the social values of choice, change, and community that shaped the employee silence and voice constructs for the two countries. The exploration of these three primary discourses is not complete without considering the discourse on power, which is a key feature of critical

discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003). Power plays a role in influencing the choice that employees make in exercising voice over silence. Being in a lower hierarchical position within an organisation immediately leaves an individual with less power to exercise voice. The way that voice and silence have been positioned leads to an understanding that speaking up is the "right" thing to do and is done for the greater good. This, in turn, casts a negative light on silence and is seen as the lesser option. In situations where individuals do not feel heard and had to resort to remaining silent, the in-group community holds the management accountable by taking on the responsibility to amplify employees' voices through reaching out to the extended community to gain power in numbers. This is seen to increase the chances of effecting change successfully.

Whilst there are differences between the UK and Malaysia in how employee silence and voice are perceived, this is limited to the way the actors interact with one another and when the wider community is engaged to drive change. In the UK, there is an active interaction between the actors whereby the people in positions of power overtly silenced the employees who voiced their concerns. The wider community puts accountability on the authority figures when issues are not dealt with after proper processes were undertaken to raise employees' concerns. In Malaysia, the interaction is passive whereby the people in positions of power deliberately ignored the voices of employees who raised their concerns. The call for action is then made public after a period of time has passed to demand for explanation and to remove the authority figures since actions were not taken to effect change. Power struggle remains the common issue for both countries due to the "us-them" divide that shapes voice as a means of going against the establishment rather than a tool to strive for positive change.

In exploring the three primary discourses along with the discourse on power, the social values surrounding employee silence and voice are revealed:

1. Speaking up is part of an employee's job.
2. Individuals and the wider community have the responsibility to use their voices to effect change, particularly in a context where people in positions of power do not respond in a socially expected manner.
3. When employees do not feel heard, a collective voice has the power to take matters forward.

In Chapter 7, I will discuss these social values in relation to the literature and to the findings of Study 1 and 2 to address the final research question.

# Chapter 7

## Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of conducting the three studies was to further the employee silence and voice research by investigating both silence and voice constructs to enhance our understanding of its relationship with employee psychological well-being in the UK and Malaysia and the implications on organisations. The existing literature has primarily focused on investigating the constructs separately and without considering the influence of culture. Through this research, the studies highlight the importance of giving the two constructs equal consideration in enhancing our understanding of individual choice in remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concerns for employees from different cultures.

The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in this mixed methods research has shown that a pragmatic approach allowed the intricacies of the relationship between diverse concepts and frameworks surrounding silence and voice, well-being, and culture to be investigated. The qualitative studies demonstrated a crucial role in providing a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence employees' silence-voice decisions and the impact of these decisions on their well-being. The quantitative study enabled the generalisation of the findings from the qualitative study to a larger sample in the UK and Malaysia to examine for cultural variation. The use of this methodological approach has also revealed three highly discussed psychological concepts in the literature in the field of occupational psychology (psychological safety, psychological well-being, and the psychological contract) as the underlying foundations for an in-depth and holistic understanding of silence and voice in workplaces. The findings provide practical insights into the beneficial and detrimental effects for individuals, organisations, and society when employees use silence and voice as coping strategies to navigate the workplace.

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings to address the four research questions in relation to existing literature. I will also discuss new findings that contribute to the existing debate surrounding employee silence and voice. This research consists of three studies whereby Study 1 informed the measures selected to develop the online questionnaire for Study 2 and provided direction for Study 3. The structure of this chapter follows the sequence of the

research questions. I will address Research Question 4 by interpreting the combined findings of all three studies.

**Table 7.1 Studies addressing the research questions**

| Research Question | Study |
|---|---|
| 1. What factors influence employees in making individual choices to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern? | 1 |
| 2. How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia? | 1, 2 |
| 3. What are the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia? | 3 |
| 4. What is the relationship between social expectation and individual choice in relation to silence and voice in the workplace? | 1, 2, 3 |

## 7.2 Addressing Research Question 1

*What factors influence employees in making individual choices to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern?*

The findings of Study 1 indicate that an employee's choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern is influenced by three factors: socialisation, type of issue, and support for voice.

Socialisation

There is a general perception amongst the participants that people from Malaysia and other Eastern countries tend to remain silent about workplace issues of concern. While this perception is in line with the literature review on power distance (Hofstede, 1984) suggesting that people from collectivist countries such as Malaysia do not challenge the authority and accept the unequal power distribution within society, according to the interview data analysis, people from Malaysia and the UK do behave outside cultural norms. Societal culture and upbringing play a significant role in shaping employees' behavioural choices, which confirms the findings of Milgram (1974), however the participants from the UK and Malaysia shared the influence of personal experiences at work on their silence and voice preferences in relation to a particular workplace issue of concern that they have. The findings of Study 1 show that more recent workplace experiences can influence, and in some instances alter employees' silence and voice behavioural choices regardless of their cultural norms and upbringing.

Type of Issue

The choice to remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern depends on the type of issue that employees have concerns about. Thus far, researchers have categorised the content of the message either as an *idea* or a *problem* (Liang et al., 2012; Morrison, 2011). In this research, I focused specifically on workplace issues of concern, which is considered a problem. My investigation led to a further categorisation of information that individuals remain silent and speak up about known as task-related and person-related issues. This categorisation has shed light on the degree of difficulty in raising different types of issues, which advances prior research.

Referring to the seminal work by Millken et al. (2003), there are indeed some issues that are considered more challenging to raise than others. The current research demonstrates that task-related issues are generally perceived by people in the UK and Malaysia as easier to

raise than person-related issues due to their apparent “objectivity” but come with certain complexities. Employees have difficulties raising task-related issues intended to *prevent* a negative outcome compared to those that have *led* to a negative outcome. Furthermore, employees perceive having solutions as a management requirement before speaking up about a task-related issue. This practice may prevent employees from speaking up about any type of workplace issue of concern as it conditions employees to remain silent about concerns that they do not have a solution to. As person-related issues are perceived to be “subjective” and open to interpretation, employees gravitate towards remaining silent about this type of issue. Employees perceive person-related issues as more challenging to raise if it concerns others, unless others have made it explicit that it is a concern for them. For person-related issues that concern self, employees raise the issues only if they also concern others, or when there eventually becomes a task-related issue that is perceived to “legitimise” their concern. People tend not to see it as a legitimate concern to raise if it remains a person-related matter and concerns only themselves.

Support for voice

Whilst socialisation and the type of issue influence individual choice, support for voice seem to be the primary factor that can change an employee’s decision on whether to remain silent or speak up about a workplace issue of concern. In general, the findings support previous studies by Guo et al. (2020) and Sing et al. (2013) that supportive supervisor behaviours and organisational culture facilitate voice behaviour. However, there were instances where participants proceeded to speak up about their workplace issues of concern although they do not perceive support for voice. There were also instances where employees were removed entirely out of the voice process (i.e., top-down decisions such as restructuring, being forced to remain silent, and were terminated from their jobs).

It is evident from the findings of Study 1 that employees expect the line manager and leadership team to behave according to the organisational values communicated. Employees see a discrepancy in espoused values and enacted values as a sign that there is a lack of integrity on the part of the employer. This leads to the lack of trust in the line manager and leadership team that influences the choice to remain silent. Organisational structures and processes also play a role in influencing silence and voice behaviours. Traditional hierarchical structures where employees perceive differences in power status with their line manager or the leadership team influences employees in both the UK and Malaysia to engage in silence, not just employees in Malaysia. Correspondingly, supportive organisational practices influence employees in both the UK and Malaysia to speak up about workplace issues of concern, not just employees in the UK.

### 7.3 Addressing Research Question 2

*How does remaining silent versus speaking up about workplace issues of concern affect employees' well-being in the UK and Malaysia?*

The combined findings of Study 1 and 2 show that silence and voice have an influence on employee psychological well-being when change is taken into consideration. The reason for an employee's behavioural choice does not predict their psychological well-being as put forward by researchers in previous studies.

Reason for behaviour: Employee silence and voice categorisation

Building on the work of scholars and researchers in employee silence and voice, this research provides a different conceptualisation from Dyne et al. (2003) and Knoll and van Dick (2013) of the various forms of silence and voice. I identified a new categorisation of employee silence and voice by focusing on workplace issues of concern and exploring the constructs from a cultural perspective. I base the categorisation on the motives of pro-self and prosocial as fundamental reasons why people remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern (see Table 7.2).

**Table 7.2 Forms of employee silence and voice about workplace issues of concern**

| Reason for behaviour | Employee Silence | Employee Voice |
|---|---|---|
| | I remained silent at work… | I spoke up at work… |
| Pro-self | • because of fear of negative consequences.<br>• because I did not want to feel vulnerable in the face of colleagues or superiors.<br>• because I fear disadvantages from speaking up. | • because I wanted to seek justice for myself.<br>• because I did not want it to affect me negatively.<br>• because I wanted to make things better for myself. |
| Prosocial | • because I did not want to embarrass others.<br>• because I did not want to hurt the feelings of colleagues or superiors.<br>• because I did not want others to get into trouble. | • because I wanted to improve the workplace environment.<br>• because I wanted the best for our customers/clients.<br>• because I wanted to make things better for the organisation. |

Employees who engage in pro-self behaviours do so to protect themselves to avoid or relieve themselves from consequences that are perceived to be personally unpleasant, whereas employees who engage in prosocial behaviours intend to benefit other people or the organisation based on altruism or cooperative motives. Based on the findings of Study 1, employees provided their reasons for remaining silent and speaking up about workplace issues of concern in terms of different forms of self-protection and the protection of others. The reasons for silence and voice are related to protection of identity, emotional protection, and instrumental protection. Employees see these as legitimate reasons for their behaviour. Existing literature presents pro-self as being defensive (Dyne et al., 2003) or quiescent (Knoll & van Dick, 2013), which frames the individual choice to engage in this form of silence and voice as being negative or passive. The term is reintroduced as pro-self in this research to remove the negative connotation associated with individual behavioural choice. This reintroduction of the construct also serves to emphasise that individuals consciously engage in the different forms of silence and voice to protect themselves and others under different circumstances to preserve or improve individual psychological well-being. It is evident in Study 2 that UK employees who chose to remain silent experience some psychological benefits by doing so. Although Study 1 suggests that the different silence and voice orientations may affect psychological well-being differently, Study 2 results show that psychological well-being is related to change and not pro-self nor prosocial silence and voice. Turnover intention is also related to change and not silence nor voice.

Voice is not always beneficial

Study 2 results show that employees who spoke up about workplace issues of concern do not experience better psychological well-being if improvements are not perceived. Voice alone without perceiving improvements does not enhance employee psychological well-being since there was no significant difference between the psychological well-being score for silence and voice (without change). These effects are consistent for both the UK and Malaysia and present a challenge to existing literature about the benefits of exercising voice. Therefore, the suggestion by Seki et al. (2014) on using employee voice as an intervention to improve psychological well-being may not be effective where change is not forthcoming. This finding also presents the implication of the phenomenon known as pseudo voice as introduced by de Vries et al. (2012). Management teams who allow employees to voice their workplace issues of concern without effecting any change will not reap the benefits of improving employee psychological well-being to foster psychologically healthy workplaces as reported in the results of this current research.

The findings support the premise that change is an important variable to consider when investigating the beneficial or detrimental effects of employee silence and voice on individuals and organisations. It reflects the definitions of employee voice as presented by Hirschman (1970), Van Dyne and LePine (1998), and Morrison (2011), where change or improvement is the central purpose of speaking up about workplace issues of concern. The relationship between change and all the elements of psychological well-being was evident in the interview analysis in how participants described feeling more in control, accomplished, valuable, and purposeful in their jobs, which, in turn, increases their engagement with others and the organisation.

Silence is not entirely detrimental

It is interesting to note that there are some psychological benefits for UK employees who engage in silence. Study 2 results show that employees who remain silent experience better psychological well-being when they perceive low supervisor or organisational support. This finding explains why UK employees may decide to remain silent as there are associated benefits to their psychological well-being from engaging in this behaviour. For Malaysia, regardless of whether supervisors or organisations are supportive, the results show that the perceived benefits of remaining silent about workplace issues of concern do not result in actual psychological benefits to the employee. The literature on cultural differences in perceived breach of the psychological contract as proposed by Thomas et al. (2003) provide possible reasons why employees in Malaysia did not experience any psychological benefits from remaining silent. Thomas et al. (2003) put forward that collectivists experience more adverse effects than individualists when there is a violation of the psychological contract. In the context of my research, employees perceive low supervisor and organisational support as psychological contract breaches, which may explain why employees in Malaysia did not experience any positive effects of silence on their psychological well-being when they perceive low supervisor and organisational support.

Behavioural shift

The combined findings of Study 1 and 2 reveal that employees weigh the benefits and risks of speaking up and remaining silent in relation to their psychological well-being. The evidence suggests that individuals use silence and voice as coping mechanisms to preserve or improve their psychological well-being. The re-evaluation of behavioural choice is suggested to be due to two newly proposed phenomena: *voice fatigue* and *silence distress*. Employees experience voice fatigue when they continually speak up but do not see any changes, which can cause a shift in behaviour from voice to silence. Employees experience silence distress when they

have been silent for a prolonged period without seeing any changes that can lead to worsening psychological well-being, extreme pain, or frustration, causing a shift to voice behaviour or the intention to leave the organisation. There is evidence in Chapter 4 suggesting a process that links these two behavioural shifts that employees experience: Voice (no change) → Voice fatigue → Silence (no change) → Silence distress → ↓ Psychological well-being → Turnover intention. While Niedl (1996) and Turnley and Feldman (1999) have suggested a pathway where people may move from voice to loyalty to neglect or exit, my research provides the foundational explanation as to why employees change their behavioural choice from silence to voice or voice to silence from the perspective of their psychological well-being. This process shows the importance of psychological safety to prevent voice fatigue and silence distress that have negative effects on employee psychological well-being, which can in turn lead to intentions of leaving the organisation.

Summary

The existing voice debate with the common assumptions that voice is 'good' and silence is 'bad' does not hold. Although previous literature has suggested that voice helps foster psychologically healthy workplaces, the findings in this current research have shown that speaking up may not always be beneficial for employee psychological well-being. Speaking up without experiencing change does not present any psychological benefits as reported in Chapter 5. Whilst previous research has shown the negative consequences of silence, the quantitative results indicate some psychological benefits for UK employees when remaining silent. For Malaysia, employees perceive the psychological benefits of remaining silent as presented in the interview data analysis, however, this did not translate to actual psychological benefits as reported in the quantitative study analysis. The results of this research contribute to the employee silence literature since Knoll (2021) put forward a claim that no empirical study has been able to show the contexts under which silence can be beneficial to the individual. The findings also shed light on the importance of feeling heard. Feeling heard is not just about being listened to but also experiencing change. The perceived change is what improves employee psychological well-being. The findings advance the voice debate in two aspects by showing how voice is not always beneficial, and silence is not entirely detrimental. However, I find it crucial to reiterate that voice leads to more changes, and this relates to better psychological well-being and lower turnover intention for the participants in the UK and Malaysia. Also, a significant percentage of employees from both countries who remained silent did not experience any changes, and this relates to lower psychological well-being and higher turnover intention.

### 7.4 Addressing Research Question 3

*What are the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia?*

The findings of Study 3 indicate that there are three social values surrounding employee silence and voice. They are categorised into three discourses of choice, change, and community, with power as the underlying discourse that connects these three primary discourses. These discourses provide a deep understanding of the social values attached to the constructs of employee silence and voice in occupational, organisational, and cultural contexts in the UK and Malaysia.

Choice: The right to speak up

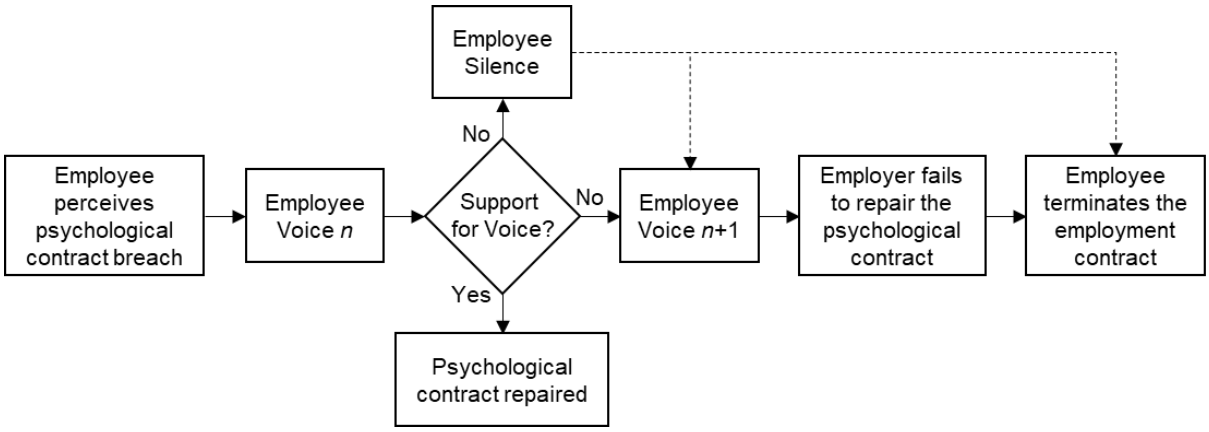
For both countries, there is an emphasis on voice, where speaking up about workplace issues of concern is seen as the right action to take. It is clear from the findings that speaking up about workplace issues of concern is perceived as an essential part of performing one's job in both the UK and Malaysia. This is contrary to the cultural norms evoked by participants in Study 1 in assuming silence of Malaysian employees. Speaking up is considered an individual right and a moral obligation. It is also considered an expected employee behaviour that should be freely exercised and welcomed by the employer. However, speaking up can be a struggle due to power differences. Although Study 3 findings revealed an assumed dyadic relationship between the employee and the employer where the employees expect the employer to effect change when employees raise concerns, this may not always be the reality.

Change: The responsibility to effect change by speaking up

Employees view speaking up as a responsibility to effect change. However, employers do not effect change when they interpret employees speaking up about the workplace issue of concern as a personal attack. As discussed under Research Question 2, employees speak up about workplace issues of concern for two fundamental reasons: 1) to protect themselves or 2) to protect others and the organisation. Study 2 results show that employees in both the UK and Malaysia speak up primarily for prosocial reasons. Employers interpreting employees speaking up about workplace issues of concern as a personal attack can have the effect of reinforcing in-group/out-group differences. Perceiving a personal attack can lead to categorising employees as an out-group instead of a responsible citizen of the organisation exercising their right to raise concerns primarily meant to protect others and the organisation. This in turn can lead to attempts to reinforce the power differential between the employer and the employees and is less likely to result in adoption of the changes that employees want to

see happen. For example, in the text analysis for the UK, the NHS organisation and the government possess the power to act on the concerns raised by healthcare professionals to improve the situation. However, the employer instead chose to use its power to silence the employees to preserve its reputation. The findings are consistent with the literature on the psychological contract. While the employees perceived themselves as meeting the employee obligations within the psychological contract by being honest (Herriot, Manning, & Kidd, 1997) to improve the status quo (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002), the employer interpreted the voice behaviour as a breach of the psychological contract. The NHS management and the government perceived employees as not protecting the organisation's reputation (Herriot et al., 1997; Rousseau, 2000). The complexity of the psychological contract breach is evident here. The employer took on the 'us-them' mentality that is divisive without understanding the fundamental reasons why employees speak up about workplace issues of concern. Based on the findings, employee voice is the employee's effort to seek resolution, to hold the employer accountable, and to allow the opportunity for the employer to repair the broken psychological contract (see Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1 The reparation of the Psychological Contract model**




An employee engages in voice when they perceive a breach of the psychological contract. In an ideal situation where the employee's concern is satisfactorily addressed by the people in positions capable of effecting change, the psychological contract is considered repaired, and the employee carries on with their job in the organisation. However, if the employee perceives an absence of support for voice after speaking up about their workplace issue of concern, they may engage in silence. Since remaining silent is considered a moral code violation within the psychological contract, the employee may exercise voice at a later time. The employee may also choose to exit the organisation without engaging in subsequent voice behaviour or after many attempts of raising their concern and experiencing no change. The choice to exit is due

to the failure to rebuild trust in the relationship with their employer since the employer failed to repair the psychological contract. As discussed previously, the behavioural shifts are due to voice fatigue and silence distress. Employees engage in silence and voice as coping strategies to preserve their psychological well-being. Leaving the organisation by terminating the employment contract has been described by several participants in both the UK and Malaysia as a way to relieve themselves from the severe negative impact of voice fatigue and silence distress on their well-being.

Community: The sense of community in making change happen

As identified in the current study in relation to Research Question 2, speaking up is often prosocial in nature. When people in positions of power do not respond in a receptive manner, the society expects the community to stand together as a collective voice to make change happen as a way of overturning the power imbalance between the employer and employees. For both the UK and Malaysia, there is the concept of 'service above self' that drives this sense of community in speaking out for those whose voices are not heard or are suffering in silence. The concept of 'service above self' explains why voice may primarily be prosocial where the beneficiary comes before the individual. For Malaysia, the findings present contexts in which employees remained silent and spoke up for prosocial reasons. The doctors put aside their self-interest in pursuing matters relating to improving their work conditions to serve the patients. They also spoke up for others in disadvantaged positions (i.e., the contract-based employees). Similarly, employees in the UK see prosocial voice as a selfless act, which requires risking one's job by speaking up about workplace issues of concern for the benefit of patients, colleagues, their families, and the public. Employees and the extended community view the employer's efforts to continuously silence the employees (i.e., unsupportive supervisor and organisational behaviours) as a sign to escalate matters. The escalation is achieved through repeated voice behaviour and widening the audience by garnering support from the wider community, stakeholders, and the public. The efforts persist to the extent where either the psychological contract is fulfilled or repaired by the employer through effecting the desired changes or terminated by either party through ending the employment contract (i.e., by employee resignation or employer dismissal).

## 7.5 Addressing Research Question 4

*What is the relationship between social expectation and individual choice in relation to silence and voice in the workplace?*

The social values surrounding silence and voice appear to function as a set of social expectations. It reveals how society expects individuals within the workplace to interact and how organisations should operate. These expectations also influence and reinforce the content of the psychological contract that forms part of the employee and employer obligations. This psychological contract consists of expected behaviours in a dyadic relationship between the employee and the employer. Employees may feel obliged to behave in ways that are in accordance with what society expects. This obligation can be beneficial and detrimental to the employee. In this section, I will address the final research question by integrating the findings of all three studies to discuss them based on the social expectations identified in the discourse analysis. Essentially, the three social expectations outline employees' right to voice, their obligation to use that voice, and how to leverage additional power to overturn any power differential. The findings reveal that the social expectations function as a double-edged sword.

**Social expectation 1**

*Speaking up is part of an employee's job.*

This social expectation sets out the requirement for employees to exercise voice when faced with a workplace issue of concern. Society considers speaking up as a moral behaviour and views it as a behaviour to be encouraged, whereas remaining silent is an unfavourable behaviour that should be discouraged. Study 3 findings revealed that members of society see speaking up as an employee obligation. Although there is the acknowledgement that the leaders and management are causing employee silence, there is the obligation to speak up even in situations that were considered psychologically unsafe for the employees. The focus was on the 'right' thing to do by putting others first instead of prioritising employee psychological well-being or job security. It can give rise to a situation where employees feel that they are not performing their job as expected if they do not speak up about workplace issues of concern.

While the authors of the texts were well-meaning based on the analysis of Study 3 and the purpose of the articles was to justify and protect the employees who chose to speak up, the moral obligation to speak up attached to one's job invalidates silence as a choice. Encouraging the act of speaking up can also be viewed as an indirect blame on employees who decide to

remain silent. This social expectation to speak up can affect employees negatively. The findings have established that employees exercise individual choice to remain silent to protect themselves or others. They engage in silence partly due to perceived severe negative consequences from speaking up about workplace issues of concern that require challenging authority figures. It is evident from the studies that the perception of unfavourable outcomes is a legitimate concern since there were many instances where employers have terminated employees from their employment contracts for speaking up.

A phenomenon that may arise from emphasising on employee voice behaviour is *silence-voice blame.* This explains situations in which employers condemn, blame, or victimise employees for their choices, whether it be remaining silent about workplace issues of concern, speaking up about the workplace violations they experience at a later stage, or speaking up about the concern at all. Specifically, victims of workplace violations such as workplace bullying, gender-based violence, and unethical organisational practices are further blamed for 1) remaining silent, 2) speaking up about concerns only at a later stage, or 3) damaging organisational reputation for taking concerns to the public. Examples include: 1) victims who are blamed for the suffering that they experience since they chose to remain silent about the workplace violations, 2) victims of sexual assault who remained silent at first due to pro-self reasons, who are then blamed for the occurrence of the sexual assault since they spoke up about initial encounters of sexual harassment only at a much later stage, and 3) victims of poor workplace health and safety practices who are blamed for damaging organisational reputation by further raising their concerns to the public.

The silence-voice blame phenomenon extends the existing literature on employee silence and voice. It provides a deeper understanding of why speaking up can be challenging for victims of workplace violations as well as employees generally. The effect of silence-voice blame can function to further suppress employee voice due to the fear of being blamed or victimised for remaining silent about workplace issues of concern, for speaking up about workplace issues of concern only at a later stage, or for speaking up about workplace issue of concern at all. Silence-voice blame puts the responsibility for employee silence-voice choice firmly with the employee, thereby absolving the employer of all responsibility for not providing a psychologically safe environment, for not offering support for voice, and for not being open to change. It shifts the focus to the employee for not acting in a way that is considered an obligation by society. The naming of the phenomenon helps increase the visibility of the concern to prevent its occurrence. It can provide employees with the vocabulary to comprehend the situation. The phenomenon can also increase the awareness of the harm caused to the victims and employees to inform policy decisions around ensuring

psychologically safe workplace practices. It is evident from the interviews how silence-voice blame negatively affects employee well-being, the organisation, and society.

**Social expectation 2**

*Individuals and the wider community have the responsibility to use their voices to effect change, particularly in a context where people in positions of power do not respond in a socially expected manner.*

This expectation sets out the requirement for employees to continuously speak up and press for change. The society views the employees and the extended community to be responsible for holding leaders accountable for their inaction.

Society expects employees and those within the same community to seek redress to ensure the supervisor and the organisation address the concerns raised. While social expectations exist to reinforce the ideal functioning of the dyadic relationship between the employee and the employer, the rules may not apply in all workplaces, requiring employees to speak up continuously to get the employer to repair the psychological contract, as reflected in Figure 7.1. This social expectation may turn into a burden and dilemma for employees. Employees who work in small teams and where the leadership team owns the organisation shared how they felt they had no choice but to leave the organisation to preserve their well-being when change did not happen after speaking up about their concerns. From the findings, there appears to be no robust system to hold people in powerful organisational positions accountable other than the groups and wider community in pressing for change.

**Social expectation 3**

*When employees do not feel heard, a collective voice has the power to take matters forward.*

This social expectation suggests that organisations do not usually take individual voices seriously. As individuals tend to remain silent in psychologically unsafe organisations due to the reasons presented in Table 7.2, a collective voice compensates for an individual's lack of power in organisational status with power in numbers.

From the text analysis, the examples are situated within the context of public healthcare organisations and issues of concern to the entire population. The social expectation may lead to prosocial voice behaviours that result in changes taking effect in public sector organisations, but this may not apply to other types of organisations. Interview participants from smaller organisations in the private sector have expressed difficulty speaking up about their concerns

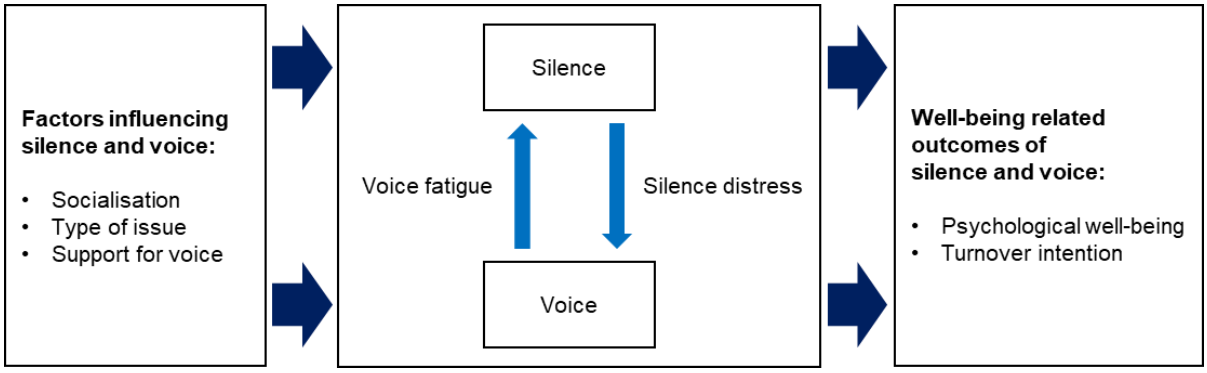
and experienced challenges in converting bystanders within the organisation to engage in prosocial voice. Bystanders can be narrowly defined as “passive witnesses” (Oberman, 2011, p. 247), individuals who are aware of the issue but choose not to intervene. However, the findings have also revealed a point where individuals may engage in prosocial voice when a threshold of what constitutes an acceptable level of tolerance for inaction by people in positions capable of effecting change is exceeded. Exceeding this level of tolerance justifies the need to rally for support from the wider community to fight for change.

From the findings of all three studies, individuals need to take calculated risks based on the circumstances to preserve their psychological well-being since speaking up about workplace issues of concern may not always result in the desired change. Nevertheless, the three social expectations outline employees’ right to voice, their obligation to use that voice, and how to leverage additional power to overturn any power differential.

### 7.6 Chapter Summary

The findings from Studies 1 and 2 indicate that voice is not always beneficial, and silence is not entirely detrimental by investigating the constructs in relation to psychological well-being. The exploration of employees’ decision to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern reveals that socialisation, type of issue, and support for voice, *all* influence individual choice. The effects of employee silence and voice on psychological well-being and turnover intention is related to whether employees perceive improvements. Study 3 explores the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in the UK and Malaysia and reveals social expectations about the right to speak up, individual responsibility to effect change by speaking up, and the sense of community in making change happen.

**Figure 7.2 A summary of the key concepts related to silence and voice**



The integration of the findings of the three studies shows how the obligation to speak up about workplace issues of concern to effect change can be beneficial and detrimental to the employee in both the UK and Malaysia. In Study 1, participants perceive the culture in Malaysia as a silent culture, but based on the study analyses, this was not the reality. Employees in Malaysia do speak up, and employees from the UK also remain silent about workplace issues of concern. Participants' perceptions of the Asian culture as a silent one and the Western culture as a voice culture can be considered stereotypes since all the study findings reflect a reality where employees in the two countries engage in both silence and voice. As discussed, personal experiences can change or reinforce one's behaviour, where learning in adulthood at work can influence an individual's choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern. It is worth considering that employees in Malaysia who may have been silent initially spoke up due to silence distress and prosocial reasons. They may have been suffering in silence for a prolonged period which led to voice behaviour. Observing others experiencing similar concerns may also have activated the behavioural shift from silence to voice (see Appendix 8 for MY1 author's experience as an example). Although the perception of autocracy persists in Malaysia, the "westernisation" of the way Malaysia is governed through inheriting the Westminster parliamentary system since its independence from British rule in 1957 as discussed in Chapter 2 is another point of consideration in relation to why there may not be significant differences between the two countries around silence and voice behaviours. With regard to UK employees remaining silent about workplace issues of concern, it may have been due to voice fatigue and silence-voice blame that led to silence. Additionally, universal systems with an inherent power differential, such as hierarchical organisational systems that exist in Eastern and Western countries, may also explain the silent behaviour of UK employees to protect themselves, not just employees in Malaysia. These organisational systems affect people regardless of geographical differences, as presented in Chapter 4.

In the final chapter, I will state the contributions to the academic debate, the implications for practice, and how organisations can foster psychologically safe environments for voice to prevail. It is important that voice should prevail as it is the means to effect change in organisations since change is what improves not only the workplace issue, but also the psychological well-being of the employees speaking up about those concerns. I will also present the limitations of my research by providing an overall reflection of my contribution as a researcher with concluding remarks on the directions for future research.

# Chapter 8

# Conclusion

## 8.1 Introduction

Through this mixed methods research, the pragmatist approach in investigating both employee silence and employee voice has allowed the common assumptions surrounding these two constructs to be investigated. This was achieved by first exploring the factors that influence employees to remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern, followed by the examination of specific organisational and cultural contexts in which silence is beneficial and voice is detrimental to employees' well-being. Finally, by exploring the social values surrounding employee silence and voice in both the UK and Malaysia, I revealed the social expectations attached to the constructs that influence an individual's choice to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern. While silence may not be entirely detrimental since there are some psychological benefits of remaining silent under contexts where perceived support is low in the UK, on the whole, employees who engage in silence have lower psychological well-being. Furthermore, voice has a higher chance of resulting in change, and employees in both countries who engaged in voice and perceived improvements were shown to have better psychological well-being. In the following sections, I will present my contributions to the academic debate on the topic of employee silence and voice, consider the implications for practice, reflect on the limitations, and provide directions for future research.

## 8.2 Contributions to the Academic Debate

Based on the findings of the current research, there are six main contributions of the thesis that advance the existing literature:

- A further categorisation of two types of issues that employees remain silent and speak up about identified as *task-related* and *person-related* issues.
- An employee silence and voice categorisation based on the fundamental reasons why individuals remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern.
- A challenge to the voice debate that holds the common assumptions that voice is 'good' and silence is 'bad' since the current research shows that speaking up is not always beneficial, and remaining silent is not entirely detrimental to the individual.
- Behavioural shifts due to *voice fatigue* and *silence distress* indicating employees using silence and voice as coping strategies to preserve psychological well-being.

- The reparation of the psychological contract model from the perspectives of psychological safety and psychological well-being.
- The phenomenon known as *silence-voice blame*, where employers condemn, blame, or victimise employees for remaining silent or speaking up about workplace issues of concern.

The research is valuable in that these findings provide practical suggestions for both the employer and the employee in relation to silence and voice in the workplace. In the next section, I consider implications for practice, particularly for leaders and line managers wanting to achieve high organisational functioning. I also consider implications for employees who choose to remain silent or speak up about workplace issues of concern.

### 8.3 Implications for Practice

Implications for Leaders and Line Managers

The findings of the current research indicate that both silence and voice can be detrimental to employee well-being depending on the context. As employee psychological well-being is crucial in achieving high organisational functioning, leaders and line managers need to consider the impact of not taking issues that employees raise seriously. To begin with, having strategies and policies that encourage employees to exercise voice may not yield any notable results unless employees perceive leaders and line managers as supportive. Employees feel heard and benefit psychologically when leaders and line managers effect the requested changes. Previous literature by Salin et al. (2014), Milliken et al. (2003), and Carter et al. (2013) provide evidence that silence about workplace issues of concern is prevalent in organisations with unsupportive supervisors behaviours. It is evident from the current research that employees who speak up have calculated the risks involved and the possible negative consequences that they may face. Therefore, leaders and line managers may want to invest the time and resources into developing skills around voice support and organisational policies and procedures that allow employees to feel safe speaking up about issues without perceiving any risks in engaging in voice. This can help to foster a psychologically safe environment that speeds up the process of speaking up about workplace issues of concern to curtail the problem.

Further to that, it has also been shown that employees remain silent and speak up about workplace issues of concern to protect themselves and others. The employer understanding the reasons for silence and voice from the employee's perspective instead of adopting the in-

group/out-group mentality that is divisive can increase feelings of psychological safety. Condemning or assigning blame onto employees only leads to employees perceiving a breach of the psychological contract, which can affect their psychological well-being and increases employees' intentions of leaving the organisation. Additionally, employers who remove employees out of the voice process (for instance by termination) need to consider the impact of this action on other employees' perceptions of psychological safety within the organisation, as this can affect the overall productivity of the workforce. Finally, leaders and line managers may want to consider providing frequent and timely update on the concerns that employees raise around the progress of the actions taken or yet to take, since the data has shown that voice without perceived change may lead to silence, which is related to lower psychological well-being and higher turnover intention.

Implications for Employees

Based on the research findings, the silence and voice behavioural shift is a common occurrence amongst employees to cope with the outcome of the behaviour and its effects on employee well-being. One of the main implications for employees is that an awareness of the silence-voice process and the associated effects (i.e., voice fatigue and silence distress) might prepare employees for the way forward. With this knowledge, employees can decide on the next course of action to preserve psychological well-being. Understanding this process and the associated emotions can also improve self-insight, increase psychological empowerment, and self-management ability. Furthermore, an awareness of the process can contribute to people feeling less isolated, knowing that this is a common experience.

### 8.4 Limitations

While this research has contributed in advancing the existing literature through a better understanding of the effects of silence and voice on an individual level in the UK and Malaysia, it is not without its limitations. I provide my reflection on three limitations that I intend to highlight, which includes considering my role as a researcher in influencing the research process.

Firstly, while this is a mixed methods study that employs a pragmatic approach in acquiring knowledge about the research topic, there is an emphasis on the initial qualitative study that drives the research design. I acknowledge my role as the researcher in inviting the participants to be interviewed and the type of participants I attract. The snowball sampling approach began with my personal contacts, who may hold similar values and beliefs on employee silence and voice. Being a person who was brought up to engage in voice and was socialised to advocate for the rights of others, my personal contacts may have been people who also hold similar

views that speaking up and advocating for change is important be it within the organisation or in society. The subsequent participants they invited are their personal contacts who may be guided by similar principles. The interview schedule was crucial in ensuring that I do not focus only on my interviewees' experiences of speaking up about workplace issues of concern but also their silence experiences should they have incidences to share. However, my interview participants may have influenced the themes that I identified, which may have had a different outcome should the pool of participants be diverse in values and beliefs. This was why I incorporated the quantitative study into the research design to ensure that the findings from the interview data analysis are generalised to a larger sample in the UK and Malaysia. That said, it may be far-fetched to claim that the results are representative of the population in these two countries due to the sample size used for the quantitative analyses. The sample size can be considered negligible compared to the millions of people employed in the UK and Malaysia. Nevertheless, the results provide sufficient evidence with reasonable validity and reliability and statistical and practical significance to arrive at the conclusions of the thesis.

Secondly, I designed the online questionnaire for participants to complete either the silence experience questionnaire or the voice experience questionnaire, not both. As the quantitative study examines the participants' experiences only during one time point, I could not examine the differences in an employee's psychological well-being score over time when there is a change in their silence or voice behaviour about the workplace issue of concern that they have, i.e., silence to voice or voice to silence. Therefore, there is no way of examining if the effects of change on psychological well-being would be similar to the results obtained in Chapter 5 when considering the different outcomes for an individual.

Finally, this research emphasises perceptions on an individual level from the perspective of the employee. To have a holistic view of the psychological contract would require including the perception of the employer since a psychological contract is between the employee and the employer. The texts selected for the discourse analysis were coincidentally prosocial in nature. They were written either by the employees themselves or people from the wider community speaking out on behalf of employees to hold leaders to account to push for change. However, not including the employer's views does not negate the findings of this research and the detrimental effects of silence and voice on employees' psychological well-being. Instead, I propose that there is the potential for future research to include the employer's views to understand the challenges they face around addressing employees' workplace issues of concern. It would be in the interest of the employers to consider possible interventions that they can implement for voice to prevail in organisations since this can lead to better

psychological well-being if employees perceive changes that can in turn lead to higher functioning organisations.

### 8.5 Directions for Future Research

The research findings and implications suggest two possible directions for future research.

As presented in the limitations, the employer's perspective is important to develop interventions that allow employees to feel safe raising their concerns. There is the potential to explore person-related issues of concern further to get an in-depth understanding on the challenges in speaking up about such issues from the perspective of the employee *and* to investigate the employers' and line managers' perceptions of employees raising person-related issues as well as the challenges that employers and line managers may face in addressing this type of issue. It is crucial to first understand the root causes of the unique challenges in raising person-related issues in every organisation before developing interventions that allow such issues to be raised and addressed.

Another area to consider is to conduct a longitudinal study to examine how employee psychological well-being is affected over time when there is a shift in an employee's silence or voice behaviour. Understanding the behavioural shift can provide insights into employees' socialisation processes and how an individual's silence or voice decision changes according to new knowledge acquired within the workplace. Perceptions of supervisor and organisational openness to voice as a result of the socialisation process can also provide insights to organisations on the interventions to implement for voice to prevail. Organisational leaders can also gain insights into existing structures that require dismantling or improving to effectively facilitate employees in speaking up about workplace issues of concern.

### 8.6 Concluding Remarks

The research reported in this thesis has contributed significantly to the existing silence and voice literature by considering employee psychological well-being and cultural variation of its effects. The findings suggest the importance for voice to prevail in organisations for improvements and innovation to occur. While many leaders and line managers choose not to address the workplace issues of concern that employees raise, those who do, contribute to better employee psychological well-being, improved organisational functioning, and positive contributions to society. Employers who listen to employee concerns and implement changes to address those concerns mitigate potential risks to the organisation, which is beneficial for organisational sustainability. The decisions that people in positions of power take have an

influence on individuals' silence and voice decisions for generations to come since values and beliefs that guide individual behaviours are reinforced and passed down from one generation to another. It is, therefore, the responsibility of leaders to ensure that people are empowered to put their thoughts into action to create value for positive changes to happen. A collective voice can ensure leaders are held to account for their inactions and for people to feel a sense of community and safety in getting their voices heard.

# References


Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Aiken, S. R., & Leigh, C. H. (2011). In the way of development: Indigenous land-rights issues in Malaysia. Geographical Review, 101(4), 471-496.

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

American Psychological Association (2019). Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards 2019. Available from https://www.apa.org/applied-psychology/psychologically-healthy-workplaces-2019.pdf

Ando, H., Cousins, R., & Young, C. (2014). Achieving saturation in thematic analysis: Development and refinement of a codebook. *Comprehensive Psychology*, *3*, 03-CP.

Aselage, J., & Eisenberger, R. (2003). Perceived organizational support and psychological contracts: A theoretical integration. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *24*(5), 491-509.

Au, K. Y. (1999). Intra-cultural variation: Evidence and implications for international business. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *30*(4), 799-812.

Bailey, M. (2011). Policy, professionalism, professionality and the development of HR practitioners in the UK. *Journal of European Industrial Training*.

Balasubramaniam, R. R. (2012). Hobbism and the Problem of Authoritarian Rule in Malaysia. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, *4*(2), 211-234.

Baron, R. (2002). *People at work: The past and future career patterns of people with serious mental illnesses*. Tinley Park, IL: Recovery Press.

BBC (1986). 1986: Coal mine canaries made redundant. Retrieved July 29, 2020, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/30/newsid_2547000/2547587.stm

Bell, S. K., Delbanco, T., Anderson-Shaw, L., McDonald, T. B., & Gallagher, T. H. (2011). Accountability for medical error: moving beyond blame to advocacy. *Chest*, *140*(2), 519-526.

Benamara, F., Cesarano, C., Picariello, A., Recupero, D. R., & Subrahmanian, V. S. (2007). Sentiment analysis: Adjectives and adverbs are better than adjectives alone. *ICWSM, 7*, 203-206.

Bienefeld, N., & Grote, G. (2014). Speaking up in ad hoc multiteam systems: Individual-level effects of psychological safety, status, and leadership within and across teams. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *23*(6), 930-945.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological methods & research*, *10*(2), 141-163.

Billig, M. (2008). The language of critical discourse analysis: the case of nominalization. *Discourse & Society*, *19*(6), 783-800.

Botero, I. C., & Van Dyne, L. (2009). Employee voice behavior: Interactive effects of LMX and power distance in the United States and Colombia. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *23*(1), 84-104.

Bothma, C. F., & Roodt, G. (2013). The validation of the turnover intention scale. *SA journal of human resource management*, *11*(1), 12.

Bouziri, H., Smith, D. R., Descatha, A., Dab, W., & Jean, K. (2020). Working from home in the time of covid-19: how to best preserve occupational health?. *Occupational and environmental medicine*, *77*(7), 509-510.

Boxall, P. and Purcell, J. (2011). Strategy and Human Resource Management. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Breevaart, K., Bohle, S. L., Pletzer, J. L., & Medina, F. M. (2020). Voice and silence as immediate consequences of job insecurity. *Career Development International, 25*(2), 204-220.

Brinsfield, C. T. (2013). Employee silence motives: Investigation of dimensionality and development of measures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *34*(5), 671-697.

British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018). British Psychological Society. https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20%28Updated%20July%202018%29.pdf

Brockner, J., Wiesenfeld, B. M., & Diekmann, K. A. (2009). Towards a "Fairer" Conception of Process Fairness: Why, When and How More may not Always be Better than Less. *The Academy of Management Annals*, *3*(1), 183-216.

Bryson, A., Gomez, R., & Willman, P. (2010). Online social networking and trade union membership: What the Facebook phenomenon truly means for labor organizers. *Labor history*, *51*(1), 41-53.

Campbell, D. T., & Fiske, D. W. (1959). Convergent and discriminant validation by the multitrait-multimethod matrix. *Psychological bulletin*, *56*(2), 81.

Carter, M., Thompson, N., Crampton, P., Morrow, G., Burford, B., Gray, C., & Illing, J. (2013). Workplace bullying in the UK NHS: a questionnaire and interview study on prevalence, impact and barriers to reporting. *BMJ open*, *3*(6).

Clarke, V., Braun, V. and Hayfield, N. (2015) Thematic Analysis. In: J.A., Smith, Ed., *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (pp. 222-248). London: SAGE Publications.

Cobo, J. R. M. (1986). Study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1975). *Applied Multiple Regression and Correlation Analyses for the Behavioral Sciences.* New York, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B. (1992). *A first course in factor analysis.* Hillsdale, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Coolican, H. (2019). *Research methods and statistics in psychology*. Routledge.

Conway, N., & Briner, R. B. (2009). Fifty years of psychological contract research: What do we know and what are the main challenges. *International review of industrial and organizational psychology*, *24*(71), 71-131.

Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Kessler, I. (2002). Exploring reciprocity through the lens of the psychological contract: Employee and employer perspectives. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *11*(1), 69-86.

Creed, W. D. (2003). Voice lessons: Tempered radicalism and the use of voice and silence. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(6), 1503-1536.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., & Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals*, *11*(1), 479-516.

Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *psychometrika*, *16*(3), 297-334.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

Cullinane, N., & Donaghey, J. (2014). Employee silence. In A., Wilkinson, T., Dundon, J., Donaghey, & R., Freeman, *Handbook of research on employee voice* (pp. 398-409). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Cullinane, N., & Dundon, T. (2006). The psychological contract: A critical review. *International journal of management reviews*, *8*(2), 113-129.

Dale, B. G., Cooper, C. L., & Wilkinson, A. (1997). *Managing quality and human resources: A guide to continuous improvement*. Blackwell.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. *Journal of happiness studies*, *9*(1), 1-11.

Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open?. *Academy of management journal*, *50*(4), 869-884.

Detert, J. R., & Edmondson, A. C. (2011). Implicit voice theories: Taken-for-granted rules of self-censorship at work. *Academy of management journal*, *54*(3), 461-488.

De Vries, M. F. K. (2011). *The hedgehog effect: The secrets of building high performance teams*. John Wiley & Sons.

de Vries, G., Jehn, K. A., & Terwel, B. W. (2012). When employees stop talking and start fighting: The detrimental effects of pseudo voice in organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *105*(2), 221-230.

Dewberry, C. (2004). *Statistical methods for organizational research: Theory and practice*. Routledge.

Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D. W., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). New well-being measures: Short scales to assess flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social indicators research*, *97*(2), 143-156.

Dick, P. (2005). Discourse Analysis. In C. Cassell & G. Symon, *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*. London: Sage.

Dittmar, K. (2020). Urgency and ambition: the influence of political environment and emotion in spurring US women's candidacies in 2018. *European Journal of Politics and Gender, 3*(1), 143-160.

Dollard, M. F., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *83*(3), 579-599.

Donaghey, J., Cullinane, N., Dundon, T., & Wilkinson, A. (2011). Reconceptualising employee silence: Problems and prognosis. *Work, employment and society*, *25*(1), 51-67.

Donovan, S., O'Sullivan, M., Doyle, E., & Garvey, J. (2016). Employee voice and silence in auditing firms. *Employee Relations, 38*(4), 563-577.

DOSM (2020, July 15). Current Population Estimates, Malaysia, 2020. https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemeByCat&cat=155&bul_id=OVByWjg5YkQ3MWFZRTN5bDJiaEVhZz09&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZklWdzQ4TlhUUT09#:~:text=Malaysia's%20population%20in%202020%20is,to%203.0%20million%20(2020).

Dyne, L. V., Ang, S., & Botero, I. C. (2003). Conceptualizing employee silence and employee voice as multidimensional constructs. *Journal of management studies*, *40*(6), 1359-1392.

Dzulkifli, F. Z., & Mohd Zameri, N. D. (2010). The functions of constitutional monarchy in Malaysian political system: The perceptions of Malay community.

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative science quarterly*, *44*(2), 350-383.

Edwards, J. R., & Baglioni Jr, A. J. (1993). The measurement of coping with stress: Construct validity of the Ways of Coping Checklist and the Cybernetic Coping Scale. *Work & Stress*, *7*(1), 17-31.

Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M., & Anzul, M. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: Living by words.* London: Routledge/Falmer.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.). British Isles Terminology. https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Isles

Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.). Malaysia on the map. https://www.britannica.com/place/Malaysia

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse: Voices.* London: Edward Arnold.

Fairclough, N. (2003). Analysing discourse: *Textual analysis for social research.* Psychology Press.

Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language.* Routledge.

Farrell, D. (1983). Exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect as responses to job dissatisfaction: A multidimensional scaling study. *Academy of management journal*, *26*(4), 596-607.

Feuille, P., & Delaney, J. T. (1992). The individual pursuit of organizational justice: Grievance procedures in nonunion workplaces. *Research in personnel and human resources management*, *10*(2), 187-232.

Field, A. (2018). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics* (5th ed.). London: Sage

Gandini, A. (2019). Labour process theory and the gig economy. *Human Relations, 72*(6), 1039-1056.

Gavin, F. (2018). Out at work. In A. M. Broadbridge & S. L. Fielden (Eds.), *Research handbook of diversity and careers* (pp. 422-437). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Gavin, F. (2011). *Workplace diversity and European enlargement: A qualitative study within the international civil service.* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester].

Gavins, J. (2005). (Re) thinking modality: A text-world perspective.

Giddings, L. S. (2006). Mixed-methods research: Positivism dressed in drag?. *Journal of research in nursing*, *11*(3), 195-203.

Gioia, D., & Brekke, J. S. (2003). Use of the Americans with Disabilities Act by young adults with schizophrenia. *Psychiatric Services, 54*(3), 302–304.

Goldberg, S. G., Killeen, M. B., & O'Day, B. (2005). The disclosure conundrum: How people with psychiatric disabilities navigate employment. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 11*, 463–500.

Gopinath, M., Nair, A., & Thangaraj, V. (2018). Espoused and enacted values in an organization: Workforce implications. *Management and Labour Studies*, *43*(4), 277-293.

GOV.UK (n.d.). How government works. https://www.gov.uk/government/how-government-works

Grawitch, M. J., Gottschalk, M., & Munz, D. C. (2006). The path to a healthy workplace: A critical review linking healthy workplace practices, employee well-being, and organizational improvements. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *58*(3), 129.

Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed Methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass.

Guest, D. E. (1998). Is the psychological contract worth taking seriously?. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *19*(S1), 649-664.

Guest, D. E. (2004). The psychology of the employment relationship: An analysis based on the psychological contract. *Applied psychology*, *53*(4), 541-555.

Guest, D. E., & Conway, N. (2002). Communicating the psychological contract: an employer perspective. *Human resource management journal*, *12*(2), 22-38.

Guo, Y., Zhu, Y., & Zhang, L. (2020). Inclusive leadership, leader identification and employee voice behavior: The moderating role of power distance. *Current Psychology*, 1-10.

Györkös, C., Becker, J., Massoudi, K., Antonietti, J. P., Pocnet, C., de Bruin, G. P., & Rossier, J. (2013). Comparing the horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale and the Auckland individualism and collectivism scale in two cultures: Switzerland and South Africa. *Cross-Cultural Research*, *47*(3), 310-331.

Habermas, J. (1967). *Erkenntnis und Interesse* [Knowledge and interest]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Happer, C., & Philo, G. (2013). The role of the media in the construction of public belief and social change. *Journal of social and political psychology*, *1*(1), 321-336.

Harris, P., Rettie, R., & Cheung, C. K. (2005). Adoption and usage of m-commerce: A cross-cultural comparison of Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, *6*(3), 210-224.

Harsey, S., & Freyd, J. J. (2020). Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender (DARVO): What Is the Influence on Perceived Perpetrator and Victim Credibility? *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 1-20.

HCPC (2016). Standards of conduct, performance, and ethics. https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/resources/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics.pdf

Helliwell, J. F., Barrington-Leigh, C., Harris, A., & Huang, H. (2009). International evidence on the social context of well-being. In E. Diener, D. Kahneman, & J. F. Helliwell (Eds.), *International differences in well-being*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world?. *Behavioral and brain sciences*, *33*(2-3), 61-83.

Herriot, P., Manning, W. E. G., & Kidd, J. M. (1997). The content of the psychological contract. *British Journal of management*, *8*(2), 151-162.

Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states* (Vol. 25). Harvard university press.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences—international differences in work-related values.* Beverly Hills, London: Sage.

Hofstede, G. (1984). Cultural dimensions in management and planning. *Asia Pacific journal of management, 1*(2), 81-99.

House, R. J. (1988). Power and personality in complex organizations. *Research in organizational behavior, 10*, 305-357.

Howe, K. R. (2004). A critique of experimentalism. *Qualitative inquiry*, *10*(1), 42-61.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1998). Fit indices in covariance structure modeling: Sensitivity to underparameterized model misspecification. *Psychological methods*, *3*(4), 424.

Ishak, A. (2019, November 5). In defence of the Malays. New Straits Times. https://www.nst.com.my/

Johansson, S. (2007). *Reading tabloids: Tabloid newspapers and their readers*. Södertörns högskola.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, *33*(7), 14-26.

Johnstone, B. (2018). *Discourse analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.

Jones, A. M. (2011). Disclosure of mental illness in the workplace: A literature review. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, *14*(3), 212-229.

Jung, H. S., & Yoon, H. H. (2019). The effects of social undermining on employee voice and silence and on organizational deviant behaviors in the hotel industry. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*.

Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of management journal*, *33*(4), 692-724.

Kaufman, B. E. (2014). History of the British Industrial Relations Field Reconsidered: Getting from the W ebbs to the New Employment Relations Paradigm. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *52*(1), 1-31.

Kish-Gephart, J. J., Detert, J. R., Treviño, L. K., & Edmondson, A. C. (2009). Silenced by fear: The nature, sources, and consequences of fear at work. *Research in organizational behavior*, *29*, 163-193.

Knoll, M. (2021). Silence in Organizations: What We Need to Know, What We Know, and What We Don't Know. In S. Sebastian & K. Höly (Eds.), *Silence of Organizations: How Organizations Cover up Wrongdoings*. Heidelberg: heiBOOKS.

Knoll, M., Hall, R. J., & Weigelt, O. (2019). A longitudinal study of the relationships between four differentially motivated forms of employee silence and burnout. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, *24*(5), 572.

Knoll, M., & Van Dick, R. (2013). Do I hear the whistle…? A first attempt to measure four forms of employee silence and their correlates. *Journal of business ethics*, *113*(2), 349-362.

Kobayashi, Y., Kaneyoshi, A., Yokota, A., & Kawakami, N. (2008). Effects of a worker participatory program for improving work environments on job stressors and mental health among workers: a controlled trial. *Journal of occupational health*, *50*(6), 455-470.

Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor.

Lee, C., Pillutla, M., & Law, K. S. (2000). Power-distance, gender and organizational justice. *Journal of management*, *26*(4), 685-704.

Liang, J., Farh, C. I., & Farh, J. L. (2012). Psychological antecedents of promotive and prohibitive voice: A two-wave examination. *Academy of Management journal*, *55*(1), 71-92.

Lockard, C. A., Ahmad, Z., Ooi, J. B., Leinbach, T. R. (2020, March 2). Malaysia. https://www.britannica.com/place/Malaysia

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative health research*, *26*(13), 1753-1760.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, H. (1991). Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*(2), 224–253.

Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, *37*(3), 413-431.

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, *77*(1), 11-37.

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence. Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications, 3, 31.

McClean, E. J., Burris, E. R., & Detert, J. R. (2013). When does voice lead to exit? It depends on leadership. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(2), 525-548.

McDonald, P., Graham, T., & Martin, B. (2010). Outrage management in cases of sexual harassment as revealed in judicial decisions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 34*(2), 165–180.

Mesoudi, A., Chang, L., Dall, S. R., & Thornton, A. (2016). The evolution of individual and cultural variation in social learning. *Trends in ecology & evolution*, *31*(3), 215-225.

Milgram, S. (1974). Obedience to authority: An experimental view. Harpercollins.

Milliken, F. J., Morrison, E. W., & Hewlin, P. F. (2003). An exploratory study of employee silence: Issues that employees don't communicate upward and why. *Journal of management studies*, *40*(6), 1453-1476.

Milliken, F. J., Schipani, C. A., Bishara, N. D., & Prado, A. M. (2015). Linking workplace practices to community engagement: The case for encouraging employee voice. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *29*(4), 405-421.

Morrison, E. W. (2011). Employee voice behavior: Integration and directions for future research. *Academy of Management annals*, *5*(1), 373-412.

Morrison, E. W. (2014). Employee voice and silence. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.*, *1*(1), 173-197.

Morrison, E. W., Chen, Y. R., & Salgado, S. R. (2004). Cultural differences in newcomer feedback seeking: A comparison of the United States and Hong Kong. *Applied Psychology*, *53*(1), 1-22.

Morrison, E. W., & Robinson, S. L. (1997). When employees feel betrayed: A model of how psychological contract violation develops. *Academy of management Review*, *22*(1), 226-256.

Morrison, E. W., & Milliken, F. J. (2000). Organizational silence: A barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world. *Academy of Management review*, *25*(4), 706-725.

Mowbray, P. K., Wilkinson, A., & Tse, H. H. (2015). An integrative review of employee voice: Identifying a common conceptualization and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *17*(3), 382-400.

Mundfrom, D. J., Shaw, D. G., & Ke, T. L. (2005). Minimum sample size recommendations for conducting factor analyses. *International Journal of Testing*, *5*(2), 159-168.

Nechanska, E., Hughes, E., & Dundon, T. (2020). Towards an integration of employee voice and silence. *Human Resource Management Review*, *30*(1), 100674.

Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, *27*(3), 521-535.

Nicholl, D. (2019). Whistleblowing: what progress since the Francis Inquiry report?. *Trends in Urology & Men's Health*, *10*(4), 32-34.

Niedl, K. (1996). Mobbing and well-being: Economic and personnel development implications. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *5*(2), 239-249.

Obermann, M. L. (2011). Moral disengagement among bystanders to school bullying. *Journal of School Violence*, *10*(3), 239-257.

ONS (2011). Office for National Statistics; National Records of Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2016): 2011 Census aggregate data. UK Data Service (Edition: June 2016).

Olson-Buchanan, J. B., & Boswell, W. R. (2008). An integrative model of experiencing and responding to mistreatment at work. *Academy of Management Review*, *33*(1), 76-96.

OED (2020). Duty. In oed.com. Retrieved June 5, 2020, from https://www.oed.com/

OED (2020). Moral. In oed.com. Retrieved June 5, 2020, from https://www.oed.com/

Pandya, A., Bresee, C., Duckworth, K., Gay, K., & Fitzpatrick, M. (2011). Perceived impact of the disclosure of a schizophrenia diagnosis. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *47*(6), 613-621.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. *Psychological science*, *8*(3), 162-166.

Perlow, L. A., & Repenning, N. P. (2009). The dynamics of silencing conflict. *Research in organizational behavior*, *29*, 195-223.

Perlow, L., & Williams, S. (2003). Is silence killing your company?. *Ieee Engineering Management Review*, *31*(4), 18-23.

Pinder, C. C., & Harlos, K. P. (2001). Employee silence: Quiescence and acquiescence as responses to perceived injustice. In *Research in personnel and human resources management*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Pope, R. (2019). Organizational Silence in the NHS:'Hear no, See no, Speak no'. *Journal of Change Management*, *19*(1), 45-66.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Renwick, D. (2003). Line manager involvement in HRM: an inside view. *Employee Relations*.

Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: a review of the literature. *Journal of applied psychology*, *87*(4), 698.

Rhoades, L., Eisenberger, R., & Armeli, S. (2001). Affective commitment to the organization: the contribution of perceived organizational support. *Journal of applied psychology*, *86*(5), 825.

Robin, M. (2019, September 19). PwC auditors feel like human cattle. Financial Review. https://www.afr.com/rear-window/the-hard-knock-auditing-life-20190918-p52smk

Robinson, S. L., & Rousseau, D. M. (1994). Violating the psychological contract: Not the exception but the norm. *Journal of organizational behavior*, *15*(3), 245-259.

Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. Free press.

Rollins, A. L., Mueser, K. T., Bond, G. R., & Becker, D. R. (2002). Social relationships at work: Does the employment model make a difference? *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 26*(1), 51–61.

Rousseau, D. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Sage publications.

Rousseau, D. M. (2000). *Psychological contract inventory* (No. 2000-02). Technical report.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview*. International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation, 16*(6), 309-314.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). The darker and brighter sides of human existence: Basic psychological needs as a unifying concept. *Psychological inquiry*, *11*(4), 319-338.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *57*(6), 1069.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. (1998). The contours of positive human health. *Psychological Inquiry, 9*, 1–28.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Salin, D., Tenhiälä, A., Roberge, M. É., & Berdahl, J. L. (2014). 'I wish I had...': Target reflections on responses to workplace mistreatment. *Human Relations*, *67*(10), 1189-1211.

Schein, E. H., & Bennis, W. G. (1965). *Personal and organizational change through group methods: The laboratory approach*. New York: Wiley.

Schein, E. H. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Schmidt, E. & Rosenberg, J. (2014). *How Google works*. New York, NY: Grand Central.

Schwab, D. P. (1980). Construct validity in organizational behaviour. In B. M. Staw, & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behaviour* (Vol. *2*, pp.3-43). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Seeger, M. W., & Ulmer, R. R. (2003). Explaining Enron: Communication and responsible leadership. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *17*(1), 58-84.

Seki, K. S., Ishikawa, H., & Yamazaki, Y. (2014). Participative climate as a key for creating healthy workplaces. *C. Biron, RJ, Burke,. et CL Cooper (dir.), Creating healthy workplaces: Stress reduction, improved well-being, and organizational effectiveness*, 15-35.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment.* New York: Free Press.

Shealy, C. N. (Ed.). (2015). *Making sense of beliefs and values: Theory, research, and practice*. Springer Publishing Company.

Simpson, P. (2003). *Language, ideology and point of view*. London: Routledge.

Singh, B., Winkel, D. E., & Selvarajan, T. T. (2013). Managing diversity at work: Does psychological safety hold the key to racial differences in employee performance?. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *86*(2), 242-263.

Smith, P. B., Fischer, R., Vignoles, V. L., & Bond, M. H. (2013). *Understanding social psychology across cultures: Engaging with others in a changing world*. Sage.

Soh, S., & Leong, F. T. (2002). Validity of vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism in Singapore: relationships with values and interests. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *33*(1), 3-15.

Steffy, B. D., & Jones, J. W. (1990). Differences between full-time and part-time employees in perceived role strain and work satisfaction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 321-329.

Stuckey, H. L. (2015). The second step in data analysis: Coding qualitative research data. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, *3*(01), 007-010.

Subramaniam, Y. (2015). Ethnicity, indigeneity and indigenous rights: The Orang Asli experience. *QUT L. Rev.*, *15*, 71.

Sumaco, F. T., Imrie, B. C., & Hussain, K. (2014). The consequence of Malaysian national culture values on hotel branding. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *144*, 91-101.

Tangirala, S., & Ramanujam, R. (2008a). Exploring nonlinearity in employee voice: The effects of personal control and organizational identification. *Academy of Management Journal*, *51*(6), 1189-1203.

Tangirala, S., & Ramanujam, R. (2008b). Employee silence on critical work issues: The cross level effects of procedural justice climate. *Personnel Psychology*, *61*(1), 37-68.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

The Guardian (2010). BP oil spill blamed on management and communication failures. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/dec/02/bp-oil-spill-failures.

Thomas, D. C., Au, K., & Ravlin, E. C. (2003). Cultural variation and the psychological contract. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *24*(5), 451-471.

Triandis, H. C. (1995). A theoretical framework for the study of diversity.

Triandis, H. C., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M., & Lucca, N. (1988). Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, *54*(2), 323.

Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *74*(1), 118.

Trickett, E. J. (1991). *Living an idea: Empowerment and the evolution of an alternative high school.* Brookline Books.

Tsutsumi, A., Nagami, M., Yoshikawa, T., Kogi, K., & Kawakami, N. (2009). Participatory intervention for workplace improvements on mental health and job performance among blue-collar workers: a cluster randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, *51*(5), 554-563.

Turnley, W. H., & Feldman, D. C. (1999). The impact of psychological contract violations on exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect. *Human relations*, *52*(7), 895-922.

UK Parliament (n.d.). Parliament and the Government. https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/role/relations-with-other-institutions/parliament-government/

University of Nottingham's Research Conduct and Research Ethics (2016). University of Nottingham. https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academicservices/documents/academic-misconduct/code-of-research-conduct-and-research-ethics-version-6-2016.pdf

Van Dyne, L., & LePine, J. A. (1998). Helping and voice extra-role behaviors: Evidence of construct and predictive validity. *Academy of Management journal*, *41*(1), 108-119.

Vemuri, S. (2019). *Managing Silence in Workplaces*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Weidman, J. C., Twale, D. J., & Stein, E. L. (2001). Socialisation of graduate and professional students in higher education. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 28*(3), 826-841. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Whitelock, D. et al. (2020, April 29). United Kingdom. https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom

Wilkinson, A., Dundon, T., Marchington, M., & Ackers, P. (2004). Changing patterns of employee voice: Case studies from the UK and Republic of Ireland. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, *46*(3), 298-322.

Wilkinson, A., Dundon, T., Donaghey, J., & Freeman, R. (2014). Employee voice: Charting new terrain. *The handbook of research on employee voice: Participation and involvement in the workplace*, 1-16.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, *2*, 1-33.

Wootton, H. (2021, January 11). Leaked email exposes crippling workload expectations at EY. Financial Review. https://www.afr.com/companies/professional-services/leaked-email-exposes-crippling-workload-expectations-at-ey-20210111-p56t5n

World Atlas (2019, July 18). Ethnic Groups of Malaysia. https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/ethnic-groups-of-malaysia.html

Worsley, A., McLaughlin, K., & Leigh, J. (2017). A subject of concern: The experiences of social workers referred to the Health and Care Professions Council. *British Journal of Social Work*, *47*(8), 2421-2437.

Xu, A. J., Loi, R., & Lam, L. W. (2014). How Abusive Supervision and Leader-Member Exchange Influence Employee Silence. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2014, No. 1, p. 12420). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Xu, M., Qin, X., Dust, S. B., & DiRenzo, M. S. (2019). Supervisor-subordinate proactive personality congruence and psychological safety: A signaling theory approach to employee voice behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *30*(4), 440-453.

Zhai, J. (2020). Breaking the Silent Treatment: The Contractual Enforceability of Non-Disclosure Agreements for Workplace Sexual Harassment Settlements. Colum. Bus. L. Rev., 396.

# Appendices

**Appendix 1: Study 1 Participant Information Sheet**

# PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

**Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology**

Project Title: The effects of silence and voice on employees' well-being in the UK and in Malaysia

Researcher: Choo Wei Hoong, wei.choo@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Gavin, fiona.gavin@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 0218

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study about understanding the impact of remaining silent and/or speaking up on employees' well-being. Before you begin, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it involves for you.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The aim of the study is to explore how remaining silent and/or speaking up about workplace issues of concern influence the well-being of employees in the UK and in Malaysia. Although strategies have been put in place by organisations to encourage employees to exercise voice, employee silence is still common in workplaces. As there is still much to learn about the organisational and personal factors that influence an employee's decision on whether to remain silent and/or to speak up about workplace issues of concern and how that can affect an individual's well-being, this study investigates the different aspects of silence and/or voice that lead to different well-being outcomes for employees.

**Why have I been invited?**

You have been invited because you have been in situations where you remained silent and/or have spoken up about workplace issues of concern. You were reporting to a line manager and was under paid employment by the organisation. You are either a British citizen working in the UK or a Malaysian citizen working in Malaysia when you experienced remaining silent and/or speaking up about the issues of concern in your current or previous workplace. If you decide to take part, you will be one of the 32 participants from the UK and Malaysia taking part in this research.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. And you may change your mind about being involved at any time, or decline to answer a particular question. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study without giving a reason.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you choose to take part, you will be asked to attend a one-to-one interview, which will last about 30 minutes. Before the start of the interview, we will request for your consent and you will be asked to sign a consent form should you agree to participate in the study. This interview is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. After the interview, if you no longer feel comfortable with the study, it may not be technically possible to withdraw your data unless requested within 7 days. If you know of a personal contact who would be interested to participate in a similar interview, do let the researcher know how they can get in touch with your personal contact.

**Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?**

Whilst the study may not benefit you directly, the information that we gather from your participation in this study may help enhance the understanding of the impact of silence and voice on employees' well-being in the UK and in Malaysia. Your participation is therefore highly valued.

**Are there any possible disadvantages or risks in taking part?**

Participating in the study may require you to recall or recount experiences in your workplace that that may cause distress. In the case that you find the interview overwhelming, you are free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason.

If you wish to seek for emotional support or speak to someone about your experiences, you may consider contacting mind at https://www.mind.org.uk/ or Samaritans at https://www.samaritans.org/ for UK participants. For Malaysian participants, you may contact Befrienders at https://www.befrienders.org.my/ or RELATE at https://relate.com.my/.

You can visit your GP (general practitioner) for any health concerns you have. If you are not registered with a GP, for UK participants, you can use the online NHS Choices 'find GP services' tool to find your local surgery/practice: https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4. For Malaysian participants, if you are not currently employed, you can visit the public clinics or hospitals. If you are currently employed, you can visit the panel clinics or hospitals registered with your organisation. If you do not have the list of panel clinics and hospitals, do contact your organisation's Human Resources Department for the list.

If you wish to get advice or guidance about disputes or query that you have about relationship issues within the workplace, we advise you to contact Acas at http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2042 for UK participants and Jabatan Tenaga Kerja (State Labour Department) at http://pesaraonline.net/tel.htm for Malaysian participants.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**

We will follow ethical and legal practice and all information collected about you during the course of the research will be anonymous and kept strictly confidential. It will only be viewed by the researchers and authorised persons.

The interview will be recorded using an audio recording device. This is to make sure that your views are represented correctly in the study. Your personal details will be removed when the recordings are transcribed to ensure anonymity. If you do not wish to use your own name, you can choose a fictional name to protect your identity. Any information that may identify you or your work and social networks will be changed or made anonymous.

If you participate in this study, some parts of the data collected for the study may be reviewed by authorised persons from the University of Nottingham who are organising the research to check that the study is being carried out correctly. All persons will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do our best to meet this duty.

The only exception where a breach of confidentiality might be required is if there is disclosure of any illegal activities, and disclosure or evidence of significant harm, abuse, neglect or danger to yourself or to others. We will discuss this with you before breaking confidentiality.

At the end of the project, all raw data will be kept securely by the University under the terms of its data protection policy after which it will be disposed of securely. The data will not be kept elsewhere.

The results of the research will be written up as part of an educational qualification recognised by the University of Nottingham and may get published. Please be assured that you will not be identifiable in the thesis or publication. If you wish to learn about the results of the study, you may request for it by sending an email to the researcher and we will provide you a summary of the findings at the end of the research.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the email addresses above.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have any queries or complaints, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve your query, please write to the Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Sub-Committee (MS-DPAPEthics@nottingham.ac.uk) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.

**Appendix 2: Study 1 Consent Form**

# PARTICIPANT CONSENT

**Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology**

Project Title: The effects of silence and voice on employees' well-being in the UK and in Malaysia

Researcher: Choo Wei Hoong, wei.choo@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Gavin, fiona.gavin@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 0218

- Have you read and understood the Participant Information? YES ☐ NO ☐
- Do you agree to take part in an interview that will be audio recorded about the impact of silence and voice on employee well-being? YES ☐ NO ☐
- Do you know how to contact the researcher if you have questions about this study? YES ☐ NO ☐
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason? YES ☐ NO ☐
- Do you understand that once you have been interviewed it may not be technically possible to withdraw your data unless requested within 7 days? YES ☐ NO ☐
- Do you give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected? YES ☐ NO ☐
- Do you understand that non-identifiable data from this study including quotations might be used in academic research reports or publications? YES ☐ NO ☐
- I confirm that I am 18 years old or over YES ☐ NO ☐

---

Name: *Click here to enter text.*

Date: *Click here to enter text.*

## Appendix 3: Study 1 Interview Schedule

1. Researcher introduction

   My name is Wei and I am conducting this research as part of obtaining my PhD qualification in the area of Occupational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. As you may have read from the Participant Information Sheet that I provided, this research sets out to understand the impact of remaining silent and/or speaking up about workplace issues of concern on an individual's well-being as there is still much to learn about this area of study. In this context, we are investigating the different aspects of silence and/or voice that lead to different well-being outcomes for employees in the UK and in Malaysia.

2. Interview process

   This semi-structured interview will take about 30 minutes and will cover five key topic areas related to your experience of remaining silent and/or speaking up about issues of concern in your workplace. Please feel free to share your experiences as your input is valuable to our research. As part of the interview process, I need you to read and sign the consent form should you agree to participate in this research.

   [Collect the signed consent form]

   Before I start the audio recording, do you have any questions?

   [Start audio recording]

3. Participant introduction

   a. Tell me a little bit about yourself. What do you do? How long have you worked in this role?

   b. Who do you work with? How does your role relate to their roles?

4. Incidents of remaining silent about workplace issues of concern

   a. Can you tell me about a time when you remained silent about a workplace issue of concern? Why did you remain silent about this issue?

   b. For issues that you did not raise to your line manager, did you speak to anyone about it? And why?

   c. How did remaining silent make you feel?

      [If participants mention about any emotional, mental or physical impact, ask them for further description of the experience – e.g. can you tell me more about that?]

   d. Was remaining silent your personal choice? How did you arrive at the decision to remain silent about the workplace issue of concern?

   e. How did remaining silent influence your workplace/co-workers/customers?

5. Incidents of speaking up about workplace issues of concern

    a. Can you tell me about a time when you spoke up about a workplace issue of concern? Why did you speak up about this issue?

    b. For issues that you raised to your line manager, did you receive any support? If so, how were you supported? If not, how were you treated?

    c. How did speaking up make you feel?

        [If participants mention about any emotional, mental or physical impact, ask them for further description of the experience – e.g. can you tell me more about that?]

    d. Was speaking up your personal choice? How did you arrive at the decision to speak up about the workplace issue of concern?

    e. How did speaking up influence your workplace/co-workers/customers?

6. Research participation

    Why did you volunteer to participate in this research? What was it about this area of research that led you to want to participate in it?

    [This question is asked to capture important areas that participants may have wanted to cover but did not manage to cover during the interview]

7. Closing

    Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

[End audio recording and thank participant for their time]

**Appendix 4: Study 2 Online Questionnaire**

# Employee Silence and Voice Research

## Page 1 / Participant Information and Consent Form

# PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

### Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology

Project Title: The effects of silence and voice on employees' wellbeing in the UK and in Malaysia

Researcher/PhD Student: Choo Wei Hoong, wei.choo@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Gavin, fiona.gavin@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 0395

---

We would like to invite you to take part in this survey that investigates how remaining silent and/or speaking up is associated with employees' wellbeing. Before you begin, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it involves for you.

**What will I be asked to do?**
If you choose to take part, you will be asked to complete this survey that consists of 3 main sections, which will take about 15 minutes.

**Do I have to take part?**
Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may change your mind about being involved at any time by closing this window. Once you have completed and submitted the questionnaire, it is not possible to withdraw your data.

**Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?**
Whilst the study may not benefit you directly, the information that we gather from your participation in this large-scale study may help enhance the understanding of the association between remaining silent and speaking up and employees' wellbeing in the UK and in Malaysia. Your participation is therefore highly valued.

**Are there any possible disadvantages or risks in taking part?**
Participating in the study may require you to recall or recount experiences in your workplace that may cause distress. In the case that you find the interview overwhelming, you are free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. Please read the document linked here to learn about the support that you can access.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**
All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Please read the document linked here to learn about how your data is stored and managed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

**What if there is a problem?**
If you have any queries or complaints about the study, please contact the researcher's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve your query, please contact Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Sub-Committee adrian.pantry1@nottingam.ac.uk, who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous.

# CONSENT FORM

By agreeing to participate in this study, you confirm that:

- You have read and understood the Participant Information.
- You agree to participate in a questionnaire that seeks to understand how remaining silent and/or speaking up is associated with employee wellbeing.
- You know how to contact the researcher if you have any questions about this study.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.
- You understand that for anonymous questionnaire studies, once you have completed the study and submitted your answers, the data cannot be withdrawn.
- You give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected.
- You understand that non-identifiable data from this study including quotations might be used in academic research reports or publications.
- You confirm that you are 18 years old or over.

By clicking the button below I understand what the study involves and I agree to take part. If I do not want to participate I can close this window.

☐ I agree to take part in this study (I am a British or Malaysian under full-time paid employment by an organisation, I report to a line manager, and I have been in situations where I remained silent and/or have spoken up about issues of concern in my current workplace)

Which country are you a citizen of?

- United Kingdom
- Malaysia

What is your ethnic group?

- British - White
- British - Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- British - Asian
- British - Black/African/Caribbean/Black
- British - Arab
- British - Other ethnic groups
- Malaysian - Bumiputra
- Malaysian - Malay
- Malaysian - Chinese
- Malaysian - Indian
- Malaysian - Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- Malaysian - Other ethnic groups

Were you born in this country?

- Yes
- No

[If No] What is your country of origin?
*[A drop down list of countries]*

## Page 2 / Demographic Questions

Please fill in or select the appropriate response to each of the following demographic questions.

What is your age?
*[Free Text Box]*

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Do you consider yourself to be:

- Heterosexual or straight
- Bisexual
- Homosexual or gay
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Which category best describes the industry that your organisation is in?

- Agriculture
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Broadcasting

- Construction
- Education - College, University, and Adult Education
- Education - Other
- Finance and Insurance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Hotel and Food Services
- Information Industry - Other
- Information Services and Data Processing
- Legal Services
- Manufacturing - Computer and Electronics
- Manufacturing - Other
- Military
- Mining
- Oil and Gas
- Publishing
- Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing
- Religious
- Retail
- Scientific or Technical Services
- Software
- Telecommunications
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Utilities
- Wholesale
- Other

The organisation you work for is in which of the following:

- Public sector (e.g. government)
- Private sector (e.g. most businesses)
- Public-private sector (e.g. government-linked company)
- Non-governmental (not-for-profit sector)
- Other

What is the approximate total number of employees your organisation has in your country?

- 0 - 9
- 10 - 49
- 29 / 30
- 50 - 249
- 250 - 999
- 1000 or more

How many months or years have you worked in this organisation?
*[Free Text Box]*

How many months or years have you worked in this role?
*[Free Text Box]*

Is this your first job?

- Yes
- No

How many hours are you employed to work a week as stated on your contract?
*[Free Text Box]*

On average in the past month, how many hours did you work a week?
*[Free Text Box]*

## Page 3 / Silence or Voice Experience

In the first two sections, we will be asking you a series of questions on your silence or voice experience and your wellbeing.

In completing the questionnaire, think of an issue that you were most concerned about in your current job. This was an issue that you either remained silent or spoke up about to your supervisor or management. If this is an issue that you have both remained silent and spoken up about, think of the most recent action that you took.

Before we direct you to the relevant questions, we would like to have the following information:

Which of the following best describes your role in your organisation?

- Administrative Staff
- Junior Professional
- Middle Professional
- Senior Professional
- Junior Management
- Middle Management
- Upper Management
- Other

Which of the following best describes your line manager's role in your organisation?

- Administrative Staff
- Junior Professional
- Middle Professional
- Senior Professional
- Junior Management
- Middle Management
- Upper Management
- Other

These items are about the level of support that you receive from your supervisor. Rate the extent to which you agree to the following statements. *[1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (mixed or neither agree nor disagree), 5 (slightly disagree), 6 (disagree), 7 (strongly disagree)]*

1. My supervisor cares about my opinions.
2. My supervisor really cares about my wellbeing.
3. My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values.
4. My supervisor shows very little concern for me. [reverse-coded]

These items are about the level of support that you receive from your organisation. Rate the extent to which you agree to the following statements. *[1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (mixed or neither agree nor disagree), 5 (slightly disagree), 6 (disagree), 7 (strongly disagree)]*

1. My organisation cares about my opinions.
2. My organisation really cares about my wellbeing.
3. My organisation strongly considers my goals and values.
4. My organisation shows very little concern for me. [reverse-coded]

In your current workplace, do you generally remain silent more than you speak up about workplace issues of concern?
*[1 (I only remain silent), 7 (I only speak up)]*

Would you like to complete the questionnaire for an issue of concern in your current job that you remained silent or spoke up about?

- I would like to complete the questionnaire for an issue that I remained silent about in my current workplace [takes participants to Page 4]
- I would like to complete the questionnaire for an issue that I spoke up about in my current workplace [takes participants to Page 5]

## Page 4 / Section 1: Silence Experience

Have you tried speaking up about this issue before remaining silent about it?

- I have never spoken up about this issue before
- I have tried speaking up about this issue before

Was it your choice to remain silent about this issue? Only choose 1 (it was not my choice) if you were asked by your supervisor or management to remain silent about the issue.
*[1 (It was not my choice), 7 (It was entirely my choice)]*

What was the issue of concern primarily about?

- Task-related (for example, an operational problem relating to a work process or function)
- Person-related (for example, behaviour or attitude of a person, an unfair or unethical situation)

Was this issue directly affecting you? Note: If there is more than one response, please select all that is applicable.

- Yes, it was affecting me directly
- It was affecting a colleague(s) who I care about
- It was affecting a colleague(s) who I am not close to
- It was affecting the customers/clients
- It was affecting the organisation

How important was this issue to you?

- 1 (of very little or no importance)
- 2 (little importance)
- 3 (moderate importance)
- 4 (very important)
- 5 (of utmost importance to me)

In completing the following questions, think of the factors that made you remain silent about this workplace issue of concern. Although you may consider many of the factors as applying to you, use the rating '7 (applies to me entirely)' only for items that reflect the main reasons why you remained silent. I remained silent at work...
*[1 (does not apply to me at all), 7 (applies to me entirely)]*

1. because of fear of negative consequences
2. because I did not want to embarrass others
3. because I did not want to feel vulnerable in the face of colleagues or superiors
4. because I did not want to hurt the feelings of colleagues or superiors
5. because I fear disadvantages from speaking up
6. because I did not want others to get into trouble

What do you perceive was the impact of you remaining silent about the issue?

- It made things better
- It made things worse
- It had no impact

To what extent did you foresee this outcome?
*[1 (Did not expect this), 7(Fully expected this)]*

## Page 5 / Section 1: Voice Experience

Did you remain silent about this issue before speaking up about it?

- I did not remain silent about this issue before speaking up about it
- I did remain silent about this issue before speaking up about it

Was it your choice to speak up about this issue? Only choose 1 (it was not my choice) if you were asked by your supervisor or management to speak up about the issue but you wanted to remain silent about it. *[1 (It was not my choice), 7 (It was entirely my choice)]*

What was the issue of concern primarily about?

- Task-related (for example, an operational problem relating to a work process or function)
- Person-related (for example, behaviour or attitude of a person, an unfair or unethical situation)

Was this issue directly affecting you? Note: If there is more than one response, please select all that is applicable.

- Yes, it was affecting me directly
- It was affecting a colleague(s) who I care about
- It was affecting a colleague(s) who I am not close to
- It was affecting the customers/clients
- It was affecting the organisation

How important was this issue to you?

- 1 (of very little or no importance)
- 2 (little importance)
- 3 (moderate importance)
- 4 (very important)
- 5 (of utmost importance to me)

In completing the following section, try to think of the factors that made you speak up about this workplace issue of concern. Although you may consider many of the factors listed as applying to you, use the rating '7 (applies to me entirely)' only for items that reflect the main reasons why you spoke up. I spoke up at work...
*[1 (does not apply to me at all), 7 (applies to me entirely)]*

1. because I wanted to seek justice for myself
2. because I wanted to make things better for my colleagues
3. because I do not want it to affect me negatively
4. because I wanted to improve the workplace environment
5. because I wanted to make things better for myself
6. because I wanted the best for our customers/clients
7. because I've tried remaining silent and it affected my wellbeing
8. because I wanted to make things better for the organisation

What do you perceive was the impact of you remaining silent about the issue?

- It made things better
- It made things worse
- It had no impact

To what extent did you foresee this outcome?
*[1 (Did not expect this), 7(Fully expected this)]*

# Page 6 / Section 2: Wellbeing

Below are eight statements with which you may agree or disagree. Think of those statements in relation to your current job. Using the 1–7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by indicating that response for each statement. *[1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (mixed or neither agree nor disagree), 5 (slightly agree), 6 (agree), 7 (strongly agree)]*

1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding
3. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others
5. I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me
6. I am a good person and live a good life
7. I am optimistic about my future
8. People respect me

This subsection aims to ascertain the extent to which you intend to stay at the organisation. Please read each question and indicate your response using the scale provided for each question.

In your current job...

1. How often have you considered leaving your job?
   *[1 (never), 5 (always)]*

2. To what extent is your current job satisfying your personal needs?
   *[1 (to no extent), 5 (to a very large extent)] – reverse-coded*

3. How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?
   *[1 (never), 5 (always)]*

4. How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?
   *[1 (never), 5 (always)]*

5. How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?
   *[1 (highly unlikely), 5 (highly likely)]*

6. How often do you look forward to another day at work?
   *[1 (never), 5 (always)] – reverse-coded*

# Page 7 / Behavioural Preferences

This is the final section of the questionnaire.

We would like to know your general preference for the following statements on a scale of 1 to 7. Rate the extent to which you agree to these statements:
*[1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (mixed or neither agree nor disagree), 5 (slightly disagree), 6 (disagree), 7 (strongly disagree)]*

1. I usually develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect my work group.
2. I usually speak up and encourage others in my work group to get involved in issues that affect the group.
3. I usually communicate my opinions about work issues to others in my group even if my opinion is different and others in the group disagree with me.
4. I usually keep well informed about issues where my opinions might be useful to my work group.
5. I usually get involved in issues that affect the quality of work life in my group.
6. I usually speak up in my work group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures.

These statements are about your general orientation. Rate the extent to which you identify with the following statements:
*[1 (never of definitely no), 9 (always or definitely yes)]*

1. I'd rather depend on myself than others.
2. It is important that I do my job better than others.
3. If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
4. Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
5. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
6. Winning is everything.
7. The wellbeing of my coworkers is important to me.
8. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
9. I often do "my own thing."
10. Competition is the law of nature.
11. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
12. Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
13. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.
14. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.
15. I feel good when I cooperate with others.
16. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.

These statements are about your beliefs on how voice should function. Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:
*[1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 (disagree), 5 (strongly disagree)]*

1. When a performance appraisal made by the supervisor does not fit with subordinates' expectations, the employees should feel free to discuss it with the supervisor.
2. In order to have efficient work relationships, it is often necessary to bypass hierarchical lines.
3. It is alright for young people to be critical of their teachers and supervisors.

## Page 8 / Further Details

While you were providing your responses to the questions, were there any thoughts that you had relating to your experience that you would like to share with us further?
*[Free Text Box]*

If you are interested to learn the findings of the survey as well as to participate in a follow-up interview should the researcher require further information to understand your survey responses, please indicate that in the box below:

- I am interested to learn the findings of this study and to participate in a follow-up interview
- I am not interested

[If interested] Your email address:
*[Free Text Box]*

[If interested] Your preferred name:
*[Free Text Box]*

## Final Page / Thank you for participating in this survey!

As this is a large-scale research with the aim to conduct a cross-cultural comparison of employees' experiences in the UK and in Malaysia, we require a large number of responses. We would greatly appreciate it if you could forward this survey link to all your contacts:

https://tinyurl.com/savro

Thank you!

**Appendix 5: UK1**

# NHS staff 'gagged' over coronavirus shortages

## Doctors and nurses warned not to discuss lack of protective kit, medics claim

**Denis Campbell** *Health policy editor*

Tue 31 Mar 2020

NHS staff are being gagged from speaking out about widespread shortages of personal protective equipment that they fear could risk their lives from the coronavirus, frontline medics claim.

Doctors and nurses are being warned by hospitals and other NHS bodies not to raise their concerns publicly, according to a dossier of evidence collated by the Doctors' Association UK (DAUK).

Tactics being used to deter staff from voicing their unease include "threatening" emails, the possibility of disciplinary action and in two cases being sent home from work. Some doctors have been given a ticking-off after managers were irritated by material they had posted on social media.

"Doctors across the frontlines are extremely concerned about the lack of personal protective equipment [PPE]. Many have told us they have tried to raise concerns through the proper channels but have been warned against taking these concerns further," said Dr Samantha Batt Rawden, DAUK's president.

"At this time when we desperately need every single doctor on the frontline, some have had their careers threatened, and at least two doctors have been sent home from work. This is unacceptable. Doctors have a moral duty to make their concerns regarding Covid-19 public if these cannot be resolved locally," she added.

The NHS organisations involved appear to want to stop staff from highlighting the lack of facemasks, goggles, visors and gowns that has created huge alarm and fear at the frontline. Many health professionals are worried that they may contract the virus during the course of their work, especially if their PPE is inadequate, and pass it on to patients or their families.

In recent weeks staff have posted photographs on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram of makeshift PPE they have put together using materials such as bin bags.

For example, A&E staff at Southend hospital in Essex have been warned that they could face disciplinary action if they raise the issue of PPE publicly.

In a memo on 26 March they were told: “The posting of inappropriate social media commentary or the posting of photographs of staff in uniform who are not complying with IPC [infection prevention and control] standards and social distancing requirements is unacceptable. Such behaviour will be considered under the disciplinary policy.

“Now, perhaps more than ever, NHS staff are in the public eye and we have a responsibility to convey a professional image and to role model positive messages about social distancing. It would be very sad for moments of inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour to undermine the respect that we and our colleagues have from the public.”

Ministers and NHS bosses have organised thousands of deliveries of millions of pieces of PPE to hospitals, GP surgeries and other healthcare settings in England over the last 10 days, often with army drivers bringing it. However, many staff still report ongoing shortages.

In other testimonies given to DAUK:

- An intensive care doctor who voiced unease about facemasks was told by their hospital that “if we hear of these concerns going outside these four walls your career and your position here will be untenable”.
- Another intensive care specialist was called into a meeting with their bosses and disciplined after raising concerns.
- A GP working at Chase Farm hospital in London was sent home for voicing unease.
- A consultant paediatrician in Yorkshire was told in an email from their hospital that their social media output was being monitored and they should be careful.
- A GP who appealed to her community on social media for more supplies of PPE was then barred by her local NHS clinical commissioning group from speaking out. “I was being warned I wasn’t toeing the party line,” she said.

**Appendix 6: UK2**

# I'm a press officer for NHS staff and I'm disgusted at the way they are being treated

## Even at a time of national crisis, workers inside the NHS are scared to speak out for fear they will face disciplinary proceedings

**Samantha Wathen**

Thursday 2 April 2020

I am the press officer for a major NHS campaigning organisation. It is my job - and my privilege - to listen to the voices of NHS staff and relay their messages to the public. It is my job to give those workers a voice, in order to alert people to the daily realities inside the NHS. The NHS is a publicly-funded service; the taxpayer has a right to know what life on the frontline is really like.

NHS staff have always been naturally guarded in their response. They do not sensationalise. Being a clinician carries with it a great responsibility in terms of adhering to confidentiality, and confidences are rightly kept in a professional context.

However, there are numerous examples of NHS staff being burned for justly speaking out about what are public safety concerns. Understandably staff are therefore very wary (and, yes, frightened) of saying something that may lay them open to disciplinary action.

Amid the struggle against the coronavirus pandemic, NHS England, the government body that oversees the English NHS, is now controlling media communications and even people's personal social media accounts are being monitored. Staff have been instructed not to speak out about their concerns at a time of huge national public interest. Not only are senior management dictating who staff should speak to and about what, but in doing so they are also denying them a form of expression. NHS Trusts are asking NHS staff to regulate their emotional response during the most stressful period they have ever encountered.

Since coronavirus first began to impact on the NHS, I've heard several times a day of people's legitimate concerns and fears over the lack of protective equipment and testing - and with good reason. The government has not been listening to healthcare staff through the normal communication channels and they are proving dangerously slow to react to what NHS staff are telling them. The only sure way to put pressure on the government and make them listen

is publicly, by speaking openly to government and the people through the media. Gagging NHS staff is nothing more than an attempt at a cover up for the dire way this government has handled the pandemic from the top.

The lack of personal protective equipment and virus testing for frontline staff is a scandal. Staff are being sent into battle with no armour; their lives are being put at risk because the government has failed to provide them with suitable clothing to protect them from this potentially deadly illness. Doctors and nurses are now even crowdfunding for face masks and gloves in one of the richest countries in the world. Staff are still not being routinely tested for the virus so are unwittingly passing on Covid-19 to their patients, families and loved ones.

These issues are set against a backdrop of an NHS that has been critically underfunded and understaffed for a decade, so it is unsurprising and perfectly natural that even those who were previously silent have now felt it necessary to speak up.

All this hero worship of late makes most NHS workers quite uncomfortable. Eyes roll and the standard response is: “I'm not a hero, I'm just doing my job.” Nevertheless, that’s how they are viewed by the public at the moment, and with good reason. Yet NHS staff have been overlooked and taken for granted for far too long. The small breaks they have lately been offered have not come without a fight. Petitions for free staff parking have been created by concerned members of the public, and Johnson and co have had to concede. The mass public admiration is no more than they all deserve. It's just a shame it's taken a worldwide pandemic to force the government to see it.

I hope my colleagues continue to be the incredibly brave and selfless individuals that they are in speaking out and holding this disastrous government to account, and I hope people outside of this bubble understand the hard truth of the situation.

Doctors and nurses are the canaries in this unexplored mine. When they make a noise, it's our responsibility to listen.

Samantha Wathen is a press officer for Keep Our NHS Public

**Appendix 7: UK3**

# NHS staff forbidden from speaking out publicly about coronavirus

## Draconian measures prevent some healthcare professions discussing their work during pandemic

**Sarah Johnson**

Thu 9 Apr 2020 08.56 BST

Healthcare professionals are being silenced and threatened with disciplinary action for speaking out about their work during the coronavirus outbreak, the Guardian can reveal.

Many NHS staff are increasingly concerned that their ability to share stories about their work is being restricted by a clampdown on speaking out publicly.

It follows reports of doctors and nurses being gagged by hospitals and other NHS bodies from speaking out about widespread shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE). Tactics have included threatening emails, the possibility of disciplinary action, and some people even being sent home from work.

While there could be some logic to hospitals wanting to stop scaremongering when communications departments are overloaded with work at a busy time, many staff feel they are being blocked from highlighting their work during the pandemic.

Workers who have spoken to the Guardian say they fear being disciplined. Several professionals said they worried about losing their jobs. Examples include an email signed by the chief executive of one NHS trust forbidding all staff from talking to the media, and incidents where staff suspect emails and social media accounts are being monitored. Requests by staff to communications departments to permit them to talk to the press have been turned down, leaving staff anxious and fearful for their jobs during the worst global public health crisis of this century.

One nurse who wanted to highlight the vital role of his profession received an email (later recalled) from his trust to all staff, which banned public communications. When he contacted the communications department, he was shocked to receive a response saying simply no

media. The team did not say what action they might take to enforce the ban, he said, but the tone was threatening.

The nurse added: “As healthcare workers I think we feel generally quite secure – there’s always work for nurses. But in my correspondence with the communications department I felt quite powerless all of a sudden. It makes me so sad.” Ironically, he added, coronavirus has in fact led to the role of nurses being highlighted in a way they could never have otherwise dreamed of, including being featured on the front cover of glossy magazines.

Not all NHS trusts in England have imposed a blanket ban on staff speaking out and some are encouraging professionals who wish to talk about their work. A range of staff recently explained their behind-the-scene roles to the Guardian, but most of those speaking out tend to be doctors, often in secure positions where they are less likely to be challenged or threatened.

Kate Jarman, director of corporate affairs at Milton Keynes University hospital NHS foundation trust, believes staff should be supported to talk about what life is like in their roles. “There’s always a balance to be struck in how staff get messages across,” she said. “People should be mindful of patient confidentiality and the core messages of public information and safety but from what I’ve seen, they are doing that.”

The Guardian is aware of several cases where staff have been silenced. They include:

- A health professional who was left anxious for their job after their communications department found out they had spoken to a journalist about their work.
- Staff at one trust who faced disciplinary action for speaking out. A blanket email signed by one trust’s chief executive was sent, warning staff not to speak to media under any circumstances. Some staff believe social media accounts are being monitored.
- Healthcare workers from different trusts who volunteered to be interviewed about their job in times of coronavirus and were told they could not mention the trust or their work at the hospital.
- One hospital manager who said they had received guidance about press/media from the trust they worked for and would not be able to say anything for the foreseeable future.
- One mental health worker working on a secure psychiatric ward who said they were terrified of speaking out publicly because they have been reprimanded by senior management before for highlighting aspects of patient care.

Unions representing NHS staff have expressed their concerns. Colenzo Jarrett-Thorpe, national officer for health at the Unite union, which represents 100,000 health staff, said officials had been hearing that some NHS bosses may have been clamping down on staff wishing to expose failings in the system and improve the wellbeing of patients.

A spokesman from the Institute of Biomedical Science, a professional body for scientists, support staff and students, said members working for the NHS who wanted to talk about their vital role in the crisis were increasingly coming up against the same barriers. “Hospital trusts in England are silencing our requests for members to talk.”

The ramifications of such a clampdown at a time when NHS staff are risking their lives and being celebrated by the general public are chilling, but come as no surprise to some. Roger Kline, a research fellow at Middlesex University who has done a lot of work looking into whistleblowing, said: “Old habits die hard, and I’ve certainly been contacted by NHS and social care staff anxious about going public and nervous about challenging local managers.”

One mental health professional told the Guardian that the unspoken rule is that staff should keep their heads down, follow orders and say nothing. “When it comes to the day-to-day clinical issues and challenges we face, there is a definite power dynamic at play, and [we] are generally petrified to speak out,” they said.

Preventing people from speaking out about their work is not only happening in the UK. In the US, hospitals are threatening to fire healthcare workers who publicise their working conditions during the coronavirus pandemic – and have in some cases followed through.

**Appendix 8: MY1**

# Doctors should no longer remain silent

## LETTERS

Thursday, 19 Mar 2020

I READ with a heavy heart the letter “Contract officers get short end of the stick” (The Star, March 18).

As a doctor in the making myself, I have observed the recent developments in the medical community with a sense of frustration and despair. It all started with the supposed oversupply of housemen.

I would like to clarify that Malaysia does not have enough doctors. Our doctor-patient ratio still stands at 1:625 (based on Health Ministry data from 2017), which is far from the ideal of 1:100 promulgated by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Malaysia also has a shortage of specialists in various branches of medicine. The ongoing Covid-19 outbreak has further served to underline this fact. Doctors are being pulled out of retirement to help with the treatment efforts and housemen are also being roped in. This is despicable and clearly shows that the government has no respect and appreciation for doctors.

We pledge our lives to the service of humanity and endure humiliation and abuse through medical school and later housemanship to finally end up in the jaws of an incompetent government.

The government should not treat us as dispensable. We are human beings with livelihoods, emotions and families. For decades, we have asked the Malaysian government for humane working hours and a reasonable salary. Our pleas have constantly fallen on deaf ears.

Right now, doctors are stuck in hospitals without being able to leave, hot and dehydrated in their personal protective equipment while they try to save lives.

Malaysia does not have enough doctors; what we lack is the resources to pay their salary. What else could have ushered in the horrible idea of contract officers?

One does not have to look far to see the lamentations of these poor fellows, uncertain about their future, overworked and underpaid.

I advocate that the best way to solve this problem is to get rid of politicians. If the politicians want to treat doctors as dispensable tools, then I say we give them a taste of their own medicine.

From now on, I suggest that all politicians be given a two-year contract, which can be renewed only based on their performance. Poorly performing politicians (both MPs and ministers) should be sacked immediately. In this way, we can devote resources to hiring and training better doctors.

We should also allow contract medical officers to specialise to better address the shortage of specialists in the country. We must work to retain medical talent in the country to improve local healthcare. To this end, I advocate that all politicians should henceforth be paid no salary. All of them keep harping on about service to the nation and community, right? Let them work for free then.

It’s not like they’re wanting for money. This can further increase resources to be channelled to the healthcare system to build more hospitals, improve equipment, allow doctors to specialise and pay all allied healthcare staff better salaries.

**ARVIN T**
**Senai, Johor**

**Appendix 9: MY2**

# Kota Kinabalu MP: Where are you, minister? Time to speak up for workers

**NATION**

Monday, 23 Mar 2020

By **STEPHANIE LEE**

KOTA KINABALU: An MP has ticked off the Human Resources Minister for keeping quiet and not clarifying issues relating to workers, especially those who are allegedly forced to take unpaid leave during the two-week movement control order (MCO).

Kota Kinabalu MP Chan Foong Hin said Datuk Seri M. Saravanan should have at least provided some explanation from the start of the MCO.

Responding to a report in The Star that Sabahans were forced to take unpaid leave during the period, he said it was the minister's duty to let the workers know that there were laws to protect them.

"Does Saravanan not care about workers? Why did he not take the opportunity to clarify the laws and reassure the public that there are laws to protect both employers and employees?" he asked.

Chan said in Sabah, the state Labour Ordinance (SLO) specifically covers and protects workers earning less than RM2,000 per month.

He said the ordnance protects those who were most affected by a pay cut, including workers with minimum wages.

"According to Section 113(1) of the SLO, no deduction shall be made by an employer from the wages of an employee, otherwise than in accordance with the provision of this ordinance, " he said.

Chan said there was nothing under the SLO, which allows for deduction of pay by reason of the MCO.

He said as such, it was not right for businesses to cut their workers' pay, if they were already paid less than RM2,000 per month.

"Employers are also not allowed to force workers to use their annual leave or unpaid leave during this period, " he said.

Chan said for employees not subjected to the SLO, any right to impose a pay cut would depend on the employment contracts.

"It is therefore important for employers to consult and get their employees' consent prior to cutting their pay, " he said.

He added that employees have to be reasonable when negotiating with their employers regarding any pay cut, or imposing of unpaid leave as the intention was not to make the business go bust.

"For those with salaries under RM4,000 per month, who are given notice to take unpaid leave of at least one month due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their employers can redeem RM600 per employee from the Self-Employment Social Security Scheme, " he said.

Through the Employment Insurance System (EIS), employers could download the scheme's ERPC-19 form online and submit them back via email.