Article

Organizational silence in private small and medium enterprises in Malaysia

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Abstract: Currently, there is little study on managing organizational silence in Malaysia post COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to examine the determinants of organizational silence and the impacts of silence on private sectors and employees. The target respondents are two hundred individuals above 21 years old working in private sectors across Malaysia. Purposive sampling is selected for this study because the target respondents must be individuals working in private sectors across Malaysia. The strongest predictor of organizational silence is the attitudes of immediate superior, followed by attitudes of top management and communication opportunities. This study provides valuable information to the employees and management in the private sector to recognize the behaviors that will create silence within the organization.

Keywords: organizational silence; attitudes of superior and top management; private sector; communication opportunities

1. Introduction

Organizational silence may also appear when employees choose to keep quiet about the unethical behaviors of their immediate superiors to protect them from potential embarrassment and not jeopardize their reputation (Cetin, 2020). Mohadesi (2021) revealed that a professional staff member in a regional Australian public university commented that her superior set up a pre-meeting to instruct her on what to say in the formal meeting. Besides, in the annual employee survey conducted by Federal Express in Japan, most of the Japanese workers picked the middle response option on the scale to avoid embarrassing their superiors (Barkhoda et al., 2021).

Organizational silence is detrimental to the organization. The silence culture will lead to catastrophic consequences. Employees who dare not speak the truth about the problem and voice opinions will restrict the decision-makers from having sufficient information to make the correct decisions and fix potential issues (Brinsfield and Edwards, 2021). It will also lead to a decrease in employee loyalty and commitment, increase absenteeism, low organizational performance and morale, and corruption (Cetin, 2020). Employees' mental health may also be affected due to organizational silence, where it creates anger, stress, humiliation, frustration, and disengagement among the employees that will decrease job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hassan et al., 2019). The silent behavior will impede employees' creativity and innovation capability and affect productivity; it will create a significant detrimental effect on the organization (Wang et al., 2020).

Organizational silence and withholding of job-related information have been discussed by researchers post COVID-19 pandemic (Anand et al., 2024). Due to competition and lack of assurance about long-term employment, permanent and contract staff are under pressure after COVID-19 pandemic, causing them to remain

silent and suppress opinions, ideas, and knowledge in the organization (Afzal et al., 2023). Job insecurity and job anxiety post COVID-19 pandemic contribute to greater organizational silence that withholds organizational information as means to obtain competitive advantage (Ebrahimi et al., 2023). The most common organizational silence post COVID-19 involves concealing a truthful feeling or judgement on the private sectors phenomenon or behavior (Farghaly Abdelaliem and Abou, 2023). Most recent studies conducted in 2024 (Jing et al., 2024; Kim and Song, 2024) revealed that employees are afraid of receiving unfavorable feedback from management, supervisor, and colleague due to the global economic uncertainty (Kim and Song, 2024). As organizational silence is often used by employees against post COVID job stress, this study is conducted to help company leaders in effectively controlling organizational silence within the organization post COVID-19 pandemic (Imam and Kim, 2023).

Theoretical contributions of this research

In the past decade, research on organizational silence focused on observed peer wrongdoing without whistleblowing (Hassan et al., 2019; Mohadesi, 2021). However, recent literature in 2024 brought in Conservative Resource Theory in understanding organizational silence post COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted that organizational silence may differ based on how much employee, immediate superior and top management care for their organization (Krishna et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024). However, there is a lack of research in developing countries to identify a relationship between attitudes of top management and attitudes of immediate superiors in addressing organizational silence in private sectors post COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Conservative Resource Theory, company leadership is viewed as a pressure factor that contributes to employee frustration and impatience (Morrison, 2023). Subordinates who suffer from abusive leadership may exhibit alienated behavior, such as bad quality work and harming firm property. in response to the unfair treatment of the work environment (Lee et al., 2024). However, this finding needs to be verified through further research in developing countries post COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, there is little study on managing organizational silence in Malaysia post COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to examine the determinants of organizational silence and the impacts of silence on private sectors and employees. It covers the objectives to determine the relationship between attitudes of top management and organizational silence, the relationship between attitudes of immediate superior and organizational silence and the relationship between communication opportunities and organizational silence. As job insecurity arising from COVID-19 prompting organizational silence to be more pronounced, this study serves as one of the pioneer studies in Malaysia post COVID-19 to provide more theoretical insights on whether the attitude of top management and superior, prompting more organizational silence in private sectors.

2. Literature review

Wang et al. (2020) highlighted that organizational silence often occurs in the upward communication, from the employees to the superior or higher level of the organization. Employees choose not to speak up about the mistakes or immoral

behaviors in the organization as an act not to embarrass their colleagues, superiors, and management (Hassan et al., 2019). Besides, a common belief appeared among employees that it is not worthwhile to raise concerns when there is an issue, and it is risky to raise ideas, concerns, information, or opinion in the organization (Brinsfield and Edwards, 2021). Employees will withhold their opinions on issues when they believe the discussion is fruitless, and the voice will lead to no solution (Nechanska et al., 2020).

2.1. Attitudes of top management

Mohadesi (2021) revealed that organizational silence is the consequence of top management's attitudes, where top managers are afraid to hear negative feedback from subordinates. They will become defensive about their ego and feel threatened, incompetent, and embarrassed when the negative voices suggest their weakness or incur doubts about the decision made by them (Wang et al., 2020). They tend to doubt the intention of the feedback and the accuracy of the information received (Barkhoda et al., 2021; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2019). To protect themselves, the top managers will exhibit an aversion to voice and send signals that they are not interested in receiving feedback, ideas, or opinions, thus creating a climate of silence within the organization (Barkhoda et al., 2021).

Protective silence refers to the tendency of employees in thinking about the feeling of top management before expressing suggestions post COVID-19 (Dickins, 2024). With high eagerness to retain jobs, employees tend to remain silent, modest, and prudent when meeting with top management (Gencer et al., 2023). Even though organizational silence limits the information available, which reduces the efficacy of top management in decision-making, there has been limited research on the link between attitudes of top management and organizational silence in developing countries such as Malaysia.

Recent studies in 2024 (Krishna et al., 2024; Ölçer and Coşkun, 2024) disclosed that top management who exhibit represent an authoritative image in front of the employees has high possibility of stifling organizational silence and inducing failure to respond to the middle manager and employee's concerns (Jones and Kelly, 2014). When top management is authoritative, it signals off valuable views about working conditions and worsens organizational silence (Jing et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that speaking up the truth at private sectors remains a stressful choice for the middle managers as majority of the surveyed middle managers are facing challenges how to communicate concerns effectively the top management (Krishna et al., 2024).

Organizational silence is ingrained when top management executes a centralized decision-making policy, and a formal upward feedback system is absent from the organization (Huang et al., 2005). Mohadesi (2021) explained that top managers see decentralized decision-making as a method of avoiding any kind of opposition or criticism, which they should not spend the effort and time on. Consequently, most members of the organization may opt to keep silent if they perceive that their thoughts are not accepted and valued (Brinsfield and Edwards, 2021). The centralized decision-making policy will also lead to employees' low self-efficacy because employees

perceive they have low control and are unable to make changes in the job (Barkhodaet al., 2021). Employees will reach a point where they do not voice their problems and refrain from discussing ideas or suggestions. Wang et al. (2020) revealed that employees see top managers' interest in their thoughts and proposals as an invitation or signal to speak, but they are more inclined to remain silent when they feel top management is not interested in the feedback. Since the negative attitudes of top management is associated with organizational silence, the below hypothesis is proposed.

H1: There is a significant relationship between attitudes of top management and organizational silence.

2.2. Attitudes of immediate superior

According to Mohadesi (2021), employees are more inclined to share their opinions and suggestions when they believe their superiors are approachable and responsive. Immediate superiors who are unsupportive, unapproachable, do not listen to employees and show no interest in employees' input will make employees choose to remain silent as they believe speaking up will not be effective (Barkhoda et al., 2021). Employees will only feel comfortable speaking out when immediate superiors are open to input and engaged in mentoring and consulting behavior (Brinsfield and Edwards, 2021). Wang et al. (2020) discovered that employees view openness as a signal that their ideas and proposals will be heard and taken into consideration, but when employees have a negative perception of their superiors' openness, they are less inclined to speak out (Hassan et al., 2019).

Negative attitudes of the immediate superiors who blame, criticize, and punish employees for disclosing their mistakes or challenging their course of action induces organizational silence (Afzal et al., 2023; Jing et al., 2023). Negative attitudes of the immediate superiors force the employees to remain quiet to avoid potential loss of working benefits, probation extension, loss of job advancement, delay of salary increment, and job termination (Dickins, 2024). Employees prefer to remain silent to express their disappointment when they are aware that their immediate superiors have complete control over the resource allocation (Mirkamali et al., 2024). Several studies (Dickins, 2024; Jing et al., 2023; Montgomery et al., 2023) concluded that the poor attitudes of immediate superior positively influence organizational silence (Krishna et al., 2024). It is believed that attitudes of immediate superior are associated with organizational silence.

Poor attitudes of immediate superiors are often linked to increased negative behaviors in the private sectors (Morrison, 2023). Conservative Resource Theory suggests that the behaviors of subordinates are dependent on the actions of immediate superiors who are in higher positions and in control of organizational resources (Gencer et al., 2023). Poor attitudes of immediate superiors fail to monitor, mentor, and appraise employees on their routine activities on the job as employees will just follow immediate superiors' instruction, practicing organizational silence to avoid being reprimanded and punished (Mirkamali et al., 2024).

Thus, the below hypothesis is offered.

H2: There is a significant relationship between attitudes of immediate superior and organizational silence.

2.3. Communication opportunities

Communication opportunities is the primary element of cohesion that makes it possible for individuals to work together to achieve targets and it plays an essential role in problem-solving, knowledge-sharing, and decision-making (Hassan et al., 2019). The lack of communication opportunities would prevent employees from receiving their coworkers' support and lead to silence (Mohadesi, 2021).

Communication opportunities with top management, immediate superiors, and coworkers will encourage employees to engage in the decision-making process and discussion of organizational matters, thus enhancing employees' organizational identification (Barkhoda et al., 2021). Mohadesi (2021) discovered that when employees have a strong sense of belonging to their organization, they will experience a greater sense of personal involvement and psychological presence in their job, which will boost voice over essential matters rather than remain silent.

Communication opportunities enable employees to relate importance to how leaders and coworkers treat them in the private sectors. According to Krishna, Soumyaja and Joseph (2024), lack of communication opportunities will discourage employees from interacting socially with a loss of emotional ties to the organization. Employees with limited communication opportunities may choose silence due to low self-viability and acquiescence (Kim and Song, 2024). Organizational silence takes place when employees are inactively acknowledged by the organization due to limited communication opportunities (Montgomery et al., 2023). Limited communication opportunities restrict employees' exposure of mutual respect and trust among colleagues (Mirkamali et al., 2024), which is an important prerequisite for speaking up. Psychological harm can be encountered when expectations for mutual respect are not created through sufficient communication opportunities (Jing et al., 2023). COVID-19 crisis placed unprecedented extra pressures on the employees. When employees do not feel to have communication opportunities to speak up at work, they become silent (Gencer et al., 2023). An employee may disagree with practice, but they suffer silently due to limited communication opportunities (Ölçer and Coşkun, 2024).

The lack of communication opportunities will lead to organizational silence because employees do not have the platform to provide feedback and share their opinions (Bari et al., 2020). Wang et al. (2020) further explained that when there is a lack of communication opportunities, employees are likely to believe that their thoughts are not appreciated by the management and coworkers and believe that speaking up is futile that makes no changes to the organization. An empirical assessment from Jung and Yoon (2019) indicated that lack of communication opportunities has a significant relationship with organizational silence. Since lack of communication opportunities is an essential determinant in organization silence, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: There is a significant relationship between communication opportunities and organizational silence.

Research framework, which was developed based on intensive literature reviews of the most recent research, was exhibited in **Figure 1** below.
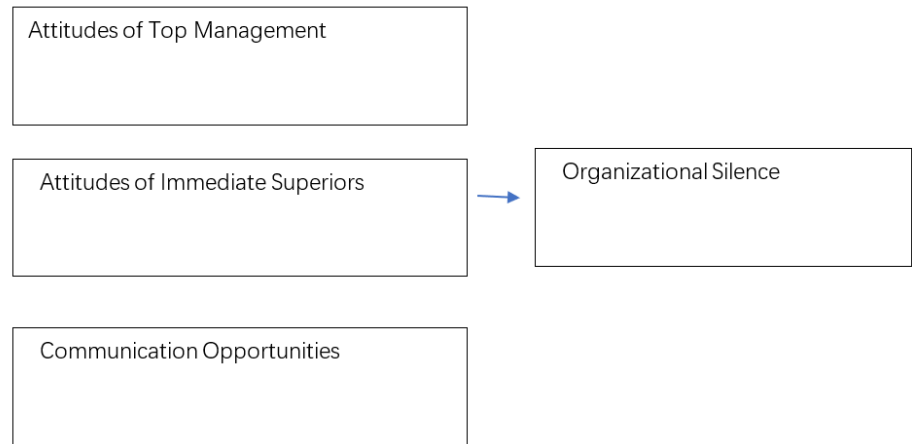

Figure 1. Research framework.

3. Research methodology

The target sample size of this research is two hundred individuals above 21 years old working in private sectors across Malaysia. Purposive sampling is selected for this study because the target respondents must be individuals working in private sectors across Malaysia. Therefore, only the respondents who fulfilled this requirement or characteristic will be chosen to answer the questionnaire. The sample size was determined by using the G power software. Consent was obtained and the filter question "Are you above 21 years old and currently working at private sectors in Malaysia? were asked before the respondents were invited to participate in this questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used in identifying respondents before respondents were approached face-to-face. By selecting participants based on specific criteria, purposive sampling facilitates the collection of detailed and accurate data about organizational silence from target respondents,

The anonymity and confidentiality are explained and assured to the participants on the cover page of the questionnaire. There were no unanswered questions since the respondents were unable to progress or submit their replies until all the questions in the survey had been completed.

There are two sections in the questionnaire where the respondents must answer a total of forty-one questions. Section A consists of six questions about the demographic characteristics, and Section B consists of thirty-five questions related to the independent and dependent variables. It is expected the questionnaire will take about 10 to 15 min to complete. The questionnaire survey began in late May 2022 and continued until the end of July 2022. No incentives are offered to the respondents who completed the questionnaire. All questions are measured using 5 points Likert scales, anchored by 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.

Construct reliability of the questionnaire items were measured using Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha values of greater than 0.7, indicating that all measurement items in the questionnaire are highly consistent (Hair et al., 2019). Two industry

experts and two experienced academicians verify face validity of the measurement items.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the gender profile of the respondents. The sampling population comprised ninety-four females, 47% of the total population, and 106 males, equivalent to 53% of the respondents.

Table 1. Gender.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Female	94	47.0	47.0
Male	106	53.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

The job function distribution of overall respondents is shown in **Table 2**. Most of the respondents, 30.5% or 61 respondents of the total sampling population, work in the operation department. Respondents from the Quality Assurance department are ranked second with 15.5% or 31 respondents, and the RandD department and Program Management department are ranked third with each 11.5%, equivalent to eighteen respondents, respectively. It is followed by the Engineering department with twenty-one respondents or 10.5%, Sales and Marketing with nineteen respondents or 9.5%, Account and Finance with eighteen respondents or 9%, and others with four respondents or 2%.

Table 2. Job function.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Sales & Marketing	19	9.5	9.5
Operation	61	30.5	40.0
Account & Finance	18	9.0	49.0
R & D	23	11.5	60.5
Quality Assurance	31	15.5	76.0
Engineering	21	10.5	86.5
Program Management	23	11.5	98.0
Others	4	2.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

Table 3 shows the working experience of the total sampling populations. Out of the five working experience groups created, 57.5% or 115 respondents have working experience of more than ten years. Respondents with working experience of 5 to 10 years are ranked second, with 21% or 42 respondents from the sampling population. It is followed by 12% or 24 respondents with 2 to 5 years of working experience, 8.5% or 17 respondents with 1 to 2 years of working experience, and lastly, 1% or two respondents with below one-year working experience.

Table 3. Working experience.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Below 1 year	2	1.0	1.0
1–2 years	17	8.5	9.5
2–5 years	24	12.0	21.5
5–10 years	42	21.0	42.5
Above 10 years	115	57.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

Multiple regression analysis is used to analyze data in this research as it allows researchers to assess the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable (organizational silence) and several predictor variables (attitudes of top management, attitudes of immediate superiors, and communication opportunities). Multiple regression analysis measures the importance of each of the predictors to the relationship (Hair et al., 2019), to better study three formulated hypotheses in this research in accurately predicting key factors affecting organizational silence in Malaysia. Since this study measures the relationship between independent (Attitudes of top management, attitudes of immediate superior and communication opportunities) and dependent variable (organizational silence), it is more suitable to use multiple linear regression compared to structural equation modelling. Structural Equation Modeling assumes that all variables are measured without error, which is not always the case in quantitative research (Hair et al., 2019),

As indicated by the multiple linear regression in **Table 4**, organizational silence is the dependent variable, and the independent variables are the attitudes of top management, the attitudes of immediate superior, and the communication opportunities. Referring to the model summary presented in **Table 4.** 0.10, the R square of this model is 0.229. It indicates that 22.9% of the variation in organizational silence is explained by the attitudes of top management, the attitudes of immediate superior, and communication opportunities. The standardized coefficient beta revealed that the strongest predictor of organizational silence is the attitudes of immediate superior with beta 0.317, followed by attitudes of top management with beta 0.274 and communication opportunities with beta 0.207. In addition, the VIF values of all the variables are less than 5, which indicates there is no multicollinearity problem (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. Multiple linear regression.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.203	0.300		4.011	0.000	
Attitudes of Top Management	0.279	0.068	0.274	4.097	0.000	1.140
Attitudes of Immediate Superior	0.384	0.085	0.317	4.497	0.000	1.264
Communication Opportunities	−0.182	0.058	−0.207	−3.13	0.002	1.117

5. Discussion

Research Objective 1: To determine the relationship between attitudes of top management and organizational silence.

The first research objective is measured by Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis one proposed there is a significant relationship between attitudes of top management and organizational silence. The analysis result from multiple linear regression showed that Hypothesis 1 is supported, where there is a significant relationship between attitudes of top management and organizational silence.

Top managers who are afraid to hear negative feedback from subordinates will exhibit an aversion to voice and send signals that they are not interested in receiving feedback, thus creating a climate of silence within the organization (Jung and Yoon, 2019) The belief of top management that they know the best and have the most up-to-date and accurate information about the problems facing the organization has led the employees to believe speaking out serves no purpose and is dangerous when the feedback triggers the annoyance of top managers (Hassan et al., 2019). Employees may keep silent if they perceive their thoughts are not accepted and valued (Hassan et al., 2019).

Therefore, it can be concluded that negative attitudes of top management affect organizational silence, and it can be used as a relevant predictive factor to analyze organizational silence.

Research Objective 2: To determine the relationship between attitudes of immediate superior and organizational silence.

Hypothesis two is the measure of the second research objective, proposing there is a significant relationship between attitudes of immediate superior and organizational silence The regression result showed that attitudes of immediate superior have a significant positive relationship with organizational silence. Hypothesis two is supported. Besides, attitudes of immediate superior are the strongest predictor of organizational silence, with the highest standardized beta of 0.317. This finding is in coherence with the study by Mohadesi (2021) in which silence within an organization occurs according to the perception of employees on immediate superior's attitudes to voice and silence.

Immediate superiors who are unsupportive and show no interest in employees' input will make employees choose to remain silent as they believe speaking up will not be effective (Nechanska et al., 2020). Chou and Chang (2020) found that the superior's openness to feedback and comment will reduce silent behavior and promote voice in the organization. Besides, abusive supervision will lead to silence within the organization as employees remain quiet to avoid further abusive actions and protect their resources (Hassan et al., 2019). The presence of immediate superior ostracism will cause silence to be deep-rooted in the organization. Ostracized employees will use silence as a tool to deal with ostracism behavior, which can suppress their emotions and avoid confrontation with their superiors (Nechanska et al., 2020).

Research Objective 3: To determine the relationship between communication opportunities and organizational silence.

The third research objective is measured by Hypothesis 3, which proposed there is a significant relationship between communication opportunities and organizational

silence. Hypothesis three is supported in accordance with the regression result, where there is a significant relationship between communication opportunities and organizational silence. The standardized beta of −0.207 revealed that communication opportunities negatively impact organizational silence.

Open communication in the organization will enhance employees' organizational identification due to employees being encouraged to participate in the decision-making process and discussion of organizational matters. A strong organizational identification will boost voice within the organization rather than silence behavior (Chou and Chang, 2020). The absence of communication opportunities in the organization leads to silence because employees do not have the platform to provide feedback and share their opinions (Chou and Chang, 2020). Employees perceive their thoughts are not appreciated by the management and coworkers and believe that speaking up is futile and that makes no changes to the organization. Thus, it can be concluded that communication opportunities are a useful predictor to explain organizational silence.

6. Practical implications

The findings help the employees to recognize the reasons behind top management and immediate superiors who are averse to voice. Employees can consider alternative ways when dealing with top management and immediate superiors so that they can accept feedback or opinion. Besides, the study found that immediate superior's attitudes are the strongest predictor of organizational silence. This result will benefit the immediate superiors to understand that abusive supervision, ostracism, unapproachable and unsupportive behavior, not showing interest in employees' input, and not being open to feedback will cause employees to be less inclined to speak out and leading to silence.

In addition, this study provides valuable information to the top management to recognize the behaviors that will create silence within the organization. These behaviors include being afraid to hear negative feedback, doubting the intention of the feedback and the accuracy of the information received, aversion to voice, perceiving upward communication as dangerous, and various implicit beliefs such as they know the best and have the most accurate and up-to-date information. Furthermore, top management shall learn that centralized decision-making policy and the absence of a formal upward feedback system are among the major contributors that lead to organizational silence. Employees when disengaged from the decision-making process will act in a passive manner and refrain from speaking out their own thoughts and ideas.

This study serves as one of the pioneer studies in Malaysia post COVID-19 to provide more theoretical insights on whether the attitude of top management and superior, prompting more organizational silence in private sectors.

Many private sectors in Malaysia are facing silence within the organization, but this research topic is not well studied in the Malaysian context. This study provides clear insight and guidance to immediate superiors, top management, and the organization about why employees are silent and the detrimental consequences of being silent on both the employees and the organization. Management of Malaysian

private sectors should recognize that the importance to quickly and effectively solving problems is encouraging employees to speak up and fostering a culture in which bravely speaks up views and opinions will be regarded as employees' duty and responsibility. The findings of this study will help them develop solutions and conduct appropriate actions to reduce organizational silence behavior in the organization and create a voice-friendly environment for the employees.

7. Recommendation

To reduce the silence within the organization, it is recommended for top management to send clear signals to employees suggesting that management is interested in hearing their concerns, issues, ideas, and grievances. Top managers should create a trusting environment inside the organization, ensuring the employees understand how much their feedback is valued. A psychologically safe working environment needs to be established so that employees feel secure to speak out and understand that there will be no punishments for employees who provide feedback, comments, opinions or raise organizational issues. Top management should convince employees that their feedback is desired, and they support and acknowledge the employees that are willing to speak out.

On the other hand, it is recommended for employees not to raise their negative voices to the top managers in public but consider speaking in private. It will reduce top managers' potential perception of being embarrassed and threatened. Employees should try to compliment top managers before speaking out about issues or comments, which the credits may boost their feeling of not being intimidated by the voice.

The organization also plays a vital role in reducing silence within the organization. The organization should build a culture with good organizational norms where failure is seen to be the necessary step towards growth and risk-taking is encouraged. Top managers will feel more comfortable accepting voices when they have the impression that obtaining frequent feedback from employees is normal, and they will not be reprimanded for making errors. The organization can establish a series of procedures and policies related to accountability mechanisms, including the annual reviews of performance, salary adjustment, or promotion, by taking employee voice and participation into consideration. A reward system can be implemented to reward employees that provide outstanding ideas or disclose issues which may potentially harm the organization.

In addition, the organization should enhance the communication channels within the organization by creating better communication opportunities for the employees to speak out. The organization could implement an open-door policy where top managers and immediate superiors are open to questions, suggestions, issues, and grievances raised by the employees. When employees have a positive impression of the openness of their leaders, they are more likely to speak up with ideas and suggestions. Besides, top managers and immediate superiors should possess good communication skills. The organization can arrange relevant communication training courses to improve the ability of leaders to communicate with the employees and encourage them to speak their minds.

8. Conclusion

Currently, there is little study on managing organizational silence in Malaysia post COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to examine the determinants of organizational silence and the impacts of silence on private sectors and employees. Organizational silence in the private sector is determined by key factors such as the attitudes of top management, the attitudes of immediate superior, and communication opportunities. This study provides clear insight and insight to immediate superiors, top management, and the organization about key factors that contribute to organizational silence and ways to minimize organizational silence.

This study serves as one of the pioneer studies in Malaysia post COVID-19 to provide more theoretical insights on whether the attitude of top management and superior, prompting more organizational silence in private sectors.

This study reveals that attitudes of top management and immediate superior will significantly affect organizational silence. To reduce organizational silence, top management and immediate superior should be aware of labor difficulties and take immediate action to prevent further escalation of disagreement in the organization. Immediate superior and top management must foster a communication culture that supports and encourages employees to voice concerns about problems at work.

9. Limitation of study

This research was conducted in Malaysia, a developing country by using cross-sectional survey data. Future research could be replicated in other developing countries, using longitudinal research data.

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