

Research Article

## The Role of the Communication Climate, Appearance Attraction and Personality Type to the Silence Behaviour of the Malays in the German Multinational Company

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**Abstract:** Silence behaviour is a phenomenon that occurs in an organisation that is influenced by various factors. The behaviour of employees who fail to provide important information to the immediate superior is influenced by related factors such as communication climate, appearance attraction and personality type (extrovert-introvert). This study examined the influence of the communication climate, appearance attraction and personality type (introverted extroverts) on silence behaviour. PLS-SEM is used to test the hypothesis based on data from 360 Malay workers in four key sectors: industry, services, banking, and education, especially in the Klang Valley. The findings showed a significant positive direct relationship between communication climate, appearance attraction, personality type (extrovert-introverted), and silence behaviour. Theoretically, this study contributes to the knowledge management literature by studying the communication climate, appearance attraction and personality of introverted extroverts, which has proven that predictors of silence behaviour directly. Meanwhile, the application practically helps the management to identify the behaviour of Malay employees by promoting holistic dissemination of information within the organisation.

**Keywords:** Appearance Attraction, Communication Climate, Immediate Superior, Silence Behaviour.



## 1. Introduction

In Malaysia, the phenomenon of silence in interaction is not new, especially among the Malays who practice and prioritise the value of togetherness in society. According to Isa et al. certain Malay beliefs are based on assessing the cultural dimension [1]. Silence behaviour is a situation in which employees limit the involvement of sharing information in an organisation [2]. This limitation leads to failures in the presentation of information until the occurrence of conflicts. In addition, employees will be silent when there is no consensus and discussion of the problem, especially when the superiors or leaders become too dominant in each affair. This is because employees usually choose not to interfere in the organisation's decision-making by sticking to the concept of exit-voice-loyalty, which is a commitment to showing passive behaviour and ignoring behaviour in some situations [3]. Thus, this problem of silence behaviour often occurs in Asian societies that hold the value of togetherness to the point of influencing the work culture [4].

This was also agreed by Bakar & Connaughton finding that the division of the Malay work culture in Malaysia is hegemonic and group, which can have a negative impact on the implementation of tasks in the workplace. Meanwhile, a study by Yusuf et al. revealed that local workers who work with overseas workers in one organisation face the problem of freedom of expression due to cultural differences, values and attitudes that form the basis of such holdings as providing a particular perception of the appearance attraction of the immediate supervisor [5]. A poor relationship between the employee and the superior can lead to silence behaviour in an organisation. Based on past studies, it has been found that the problem of silence behaviour is still poorly studied, especially in the climate of communication, the appearance attraction of the immediate superior and the personality (extrovert-introvert) as a variable. Based on the above discussion, it was found that silence behaviour is an issue that is influenced by the values held by the organisation's members. The silence behaviour in the organisation is concentrated in Western countries, and the focus of studies is in Asia, such as Iran, Japan, China, Indonesia, etc. Although studies have been conducted in Malaysia [4], silence behaviour in meetings of government officials is still necessary. This is because past studies [6]; [7] focus more on the private sector to assess silence behaviour. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between variables (1) of the communication climate, (2) the appearance attraction and (3) the extrovert Personality of the introvert towards silence behaviour among Malay workers in German organisations that exist in Malaysia.

- Communication Climate and Silence Behaviour

In the context of bilateral interaction, the development of the communication climate is said to be good in delivering information by the individual race to the organisation's superior. Therefore, an organisation needs to create a conducive communication climate to provide a sense of comfort to its members. In addition, the Huang et al. [8] study found that peer-to-peer supervision is also one of the reasons for silence among employees. They also found workers who had anxiety at work also chose to remain silent [8]. When there is a lack of support from colleagues and management in the workplace, employees tend to choose to remain silent [9]. The findings of the Knoll, Neves, Schyns and Meyer [10] study show that the openness of team managers to speak out positively is closely related to the silence of consent and employees. Thus, the hypothesis developed as follows:

*H1: The communication climate is positively related to silence behaviour.*

- The Appearance attraction and Silence Behaviour

An organisation that takes an excellent organisational management approach emphasises the effectiveness of communication with the appearance attraction of the employer because it symbolises the image of an organization [11]. This can be evidenced by a study by Lopez [12], stating that organisational leaders who establish relationships with employees can influence individual judgments, ideal influences and role models. This constructed relationship can make employees feel comfortable giving suggestions and trusting their supervisors. The skill of a leader or leader is one of the most important factors in organisational communication [13]. This is because external factors such as physical also attract employees to feel comfortable dealing with the leader or leader [14]. A leader or leader who appears competent can impact and influence the attitude of the message recipient, the acceptance of attention, and the behaviour [15]. Thus, the hypothesis developed as follows:

*H2: Appearance attraction is positively related to silence behaviour.*

- Extrovert-Introvert Personality and Silence Behaviour

The extrovert-introvert personality can influence the behaviour of individuals who deviate from normal circumstances [3]. For example, extrovert workers love to build social relationships and have relationships with other individuals in the organisation. At the same time, it is said that introverted workers tend to be silent and more comfortable being alone and are considered to be less productive [16]. This means that extroverts are sociable, social and love to communicate. At the same time, introverts are more likely to be alone, interested in self-employment, can work uncontrollably and focus more on careers such as controlling machines or computers [17]. Individual personalities influence employment, i.e. when employees with extroverted personalities are more popular and widespread in organisations that have a teamwork or teamwork practice of working. On the other hand, individuals with introverted personalities are considered less popular due to a lack of opinion, quiet and relatively vigilant in association and usually suitable to work in organisations that practice individual work systems such as in technical fields or working with machines alone [18]. Thus, the hypothesis developed as follows:

*H3: The Personality of an extrovert-introvert is positively related to silence behaviour.*

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Silence Behaviour**

Silence behaviour is the behaviour of an employee who fails to provide important information to the immediate superior where the information needs to be informed to the immediate superior [18]. More clearly, silence behaviour is a state of silence resulting from employees not wanting to share information due to certain factors. Silence behaviour is referred to as a symptom of stress and isolation and suggests that the silence behaviour of employees will be a hindrance to the organisation seeking to leverage its employees to achieve excellent performance due to storing self-restraint information such as difficulty interacting due to problems understanding language. In the context of this study, silence behaviour refers to the silence behaviour of Malay employees at a time when they need to share important information with top management [19].

### **2.2. Communication Climate**

The climate of communication refers to the atmosphere of interaction that occurs in the organisation that explains the acceptable and meaningful conduct that is, communicating within the organisation for the situation of information delivery from the ground up [20]. Communication climate as a description of the atmosphere of communication between the employee with the superior or employer in terms of the effectiveness of the relationship that specialises in the success or failure of the information delivery system [21]. Furthermore, the communication climate is very concerned with the role of participants in the organisation, i.e. one individual with other individuals such as employees and leaders [22]. Therefore, in this study, the communication climate is defined as the atmosphere of interaction between two parties to convey information.

### **2.3. Appearance Attractions**

According to McCroskey et al. [23], appearance attraction is divided into three dimensions: the social, physical and task-solving skills capable of achieving communication skills. Assert that the employee becomes weak and not interested in continuing the interaction if the appearance attraction of the nearest leader is not as encouraging as slow to make decisions [24]. These facial expressions are difficult to approach and do not allow the employee to show his potential. An organisation that takes an excellent organisational management approach will emphasise the effectiveness of communication with the attraction of the superior's appearance because the appearance attraction is a symbol of the image of an organisation [25]. For this study, the role of appearance attraction is an aspect that is believed to influence the Malay working class to communicate with the nearest leader.

### **2.4. Personality (Extrovert-Introvert)**

According to Huston [15] human personality can be categorised into two: extrovert, introvert and ambiversion. Kiranne, O'Shea, Buckley, Grazi and Prout [26] argue that extrovert individuals are given more attention in organisations that practice teamwork while more cautious introverted individuals are preferred in organisations that practice individual work systems, especially in the technical field. Therefore, this study focuses on the personalities of Malay workers, whether extroverts or introverts,

in determining whether to increase for employees to behave silently or speak out when working with the nearest leader, especially foreigners.

## **2.5. Spiral of Silence Theory**

This study references and applies the Spiral of Silence Theory. This theory was pioneered by Noelle Neumann [27], who argued that silence occurs when the general public knows that there are key views and opinions. Yet, people tend to change their views to follow their own opinions and approve of the main point of view alone. This is because some community members feel that they do not want to be removed or expelled from the main group due to having different opinions [28]. This means that this state of silence or silence can influence a person's readiness level in the delivery of wishes or information. In certain circumstances, some individuals do not want to speak out for fear of being expelled from the main group. Individuals less likely to be silent because they feel hopeless and unsure that their ideas or opinions are generally accepted. After all, they are considered to be against the norms [12].

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Study Samples and Data Collection Methods**

The survey used data from 400 respondents who were individuals working in the organisation. The respondents were employees in several sectors of German organisations operating in Malaysia, such as Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya and Cyberjaya. This area was selected based on the West Coast industrial corridor zone position of Peninsular Malaysia, focusing on the country's largest industrial estate. German services, banking, and insurance companies have made Malaysia's Klang Valley an investment focus based on Malaysia's rapid progress compared to other Asian countries of 5.4 per cent GDP (economic growth rate) as reported by Deutsche Bank in 2016 [29]. Stratified random sampling is used to obtain samples representing the category of sectors of German organisations operating in Malaysia. The data collection process is carried out cross-sectionally using the survey method using questionnaires distributed face-to-face and online (Google Form). Of the 380 questionnaires distributed, 360 were returned. This amount is suitable for this study and sufficient to carry out the PLS-SEM analysis technique [30].

The analysis of the respondent's background information showed that most respondents were female, which is 75.0 per cent (270 people) compared to 25.0 per cent (90) male respondents. Regarding age, on average, respondents ranged from 26 to 35 years (46.7%). On the other hand, the majority of the respondents were SPM/MCE graduates, with a total of 225 people and the majority of respondents were in the operator's position at 47.5 per cent, followed by administrative workers at 25.0 per cent and technical workers at 20.0 per cent.

### **3.2. Construct Measurement**

In this study, silence behaviour was taken from the Zulkefli study [4]. An example of the question, "I should remain silent than voice an opinion that can cause the anger of the nearest leader". The communication climate is also similar to the Zulkefli study [4], which has questions such as "I was given the freedom to use my ideas in completing tasks". Whereas the appearance attraction is drawn from the study by McCroskey et al. [23] the example of the question, "The nearest leader is very confident in completing the assignment well". The extrovert-introvert personality was taken from the Ansari and Amogh study [32]. An example is, "Can enliven the atmosphere of a ceremony". All questions use the Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree/very unhappy (1) to agree/very satisfied (5).

## **4. Finding and Discussion**

PLS-SEM was conducted to test the hypothesis of the study. However, before testing the hypothesis, this study first implements construct validity and reliability tests.

### **4.1. Construct Validity**

This study tested the construct validity of all variables (silence behaviour, communication climate, appearance attraction and extrovert-introvert personality) using verification factor analysis (CFA) to ensure that all items measured had constructive validity [33]. In addition, this study also used convergent and discriminant validity to assess the validity of constructs.

Table 1 shows all sizes of items with loading and cross-loading greater than 0.5 [33].

Table 1. Item Measurement Loading Factor

Construct	Item	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variant Extracted (AVE)
Silence Behaviour	PM1	0.70	0.932	0.883	0.802
	PM2	0.68			
	PM3	0.72			
	PM4	0.71			
	PM5	0.68			
	PM6	0.64			
	PM7	0.69			
	PM8	0.78			
	PM9	0.81			
	PM10	0.88			
Communication Climate	IK1	0.60	0.941	0.866	0.727
	IK2	0.76			
	IK3	0.78			
	IK4	0.70			
	IK5	0.78			
	IK6	0.54			
	IK7	0.59			
	IK8	0.78			
	IK9	0.51			
	IK10	0.68			
	IK11	0.70			
Appearance Attraction	TP1	0.68	0.937	0.821	0.714
	TP2	0.72			
	TP3	0.70			
	TP4	0.68			
	TP5	0.74			
	TP6	0.70			
	TP7	0.68			
	TP8	0.71			
	TP9	0.78			
Extrovert-Introvert Personality	PEI1	0.60	0.947	0.720	0.622
	PEI2	0.68			
	PEI3	0.62			
	PEI4	0.61			
	PEI5	0.78			
	PEI6	0.84			
	PEI7	0.79			
	PEI8	0.68			
	PEI9	0.80			
	PEI10	0.76			

After that, convergence validity is done to determine how an item correlates positively with each other in the same construct [33]. First, the loading factors and the average variant extracted were performed to assess the convergent validity, which found all items exceeded the recommended value of 0.5 (refer to table 1). Next, the analysis shows that the average variant extracted (AVE) is in the range of 0.5 or higher, indicating the construct's validity. In fact, constructs with an AVE value greater than 0.5 indicate that items in the construct describe more than half the variance. The findings show that the AVE in this study ranged from 0.622 to 0.802, indicating that all measurements are quite suitable for each construct.

After that, the validity of the discriminant was assessed to ensure that the square root of AVE was more significant than the correlation between the construct and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of less than 0.85. The correlation coefficient varies between 0.696 and 0.846, and the square

root of AVE correlates with the highest constructs (see Table 2). These findings suggest that the validity of the discriminant has been met [34]. Moreover, the HTMT ratio produces a value of less than 0.85, indicating discriminant validity [33]. These results show that all constructs differ from other constructs based on empirical standards. Therefore, the validity of the construct for the convergent validity and the discriminant validity is sufficient.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Construct	Silence Behaviour	Communication Climate	Appearance Attraction	Extrovert-Introvert Personality
Silence Behaviour	0.823			
Communication climate	0.846	0.812		
Appearance Attraction	0.821	0.810	0.709	
Extrovert-introvert Personality	0.720	0.728	0.696	0.827

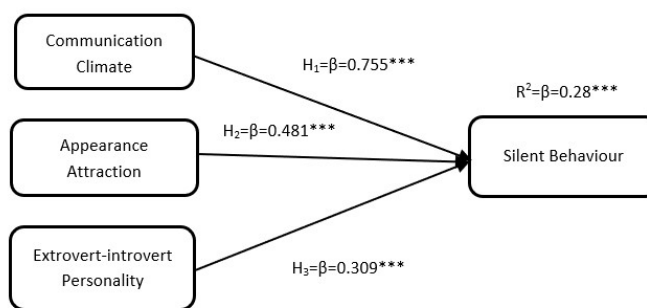
#### 4.2. Research Model

In this study, the direct relationship hypothesis was tested by PLS-SEM through the doubling method by producing 5000 multiple samples to calculate the 95 per cent confidence level for the confidence interval. The results of the analysis showed that the value of R2 is 0.280. This means that 57.0 per cent of the variations inherent in silence behaviour (dependent variables) can be explained by the climate of communication, appearance attraction and personality of introverted extroverts (independent variables). The findings showed that the communication climate positively correlates with silence behaviour ( $\beta = 0.755$ ,  $t = 26.715$ ,  $LL = 0.218$ ,  $UL = 0.382$ ), so H1 is supported. Meanwhile, the findings reveal that appearance attraction positively correlates with silence behaviour ( $\beta = 0.481$ ,  $t = 6.117$ ,  $LL = 0.268$ ,  $UL = 0.380$ ); H2 is supported. Whereas, extrovert-introvert personality also has a positive relationship with silence behaviour ( $\beta = 0.309$ ,  $t = 3.962$ ,  $LL = 0.182$ ,  $UL = 0.284$ ), so H3 is also supported. Overall findings have proven that the climate of communication, appearance attraction and extrovert-introvert personality play's an essential role in silence behaviour in the organisation. Table 3 summarises the findings, and Figure 1 illustrates the study model for a direct relationship.

Table 3. Direct Relationship Results

Direct Relationship Path	Value- $\beta$	Value-t	Value-p	Boot LL	Boot UL
Communication Climate → Silence Behaviour	0.755	26.715	0.001	0.218	0.382
Appearance Attraction → Silence Behaviour	0.481	6.117	0.001	0.268	0.380
Extrovert-introvert personality → Silence Behaviour	0.309	3.962	0.001	0.182	0.284

Note: significant at \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  ( $t > 3.090$ )



Significant Value: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Figure 1. Test Results for a Direct Relationship of the Study Model

### 4.3. Discussion

First, the positive direct effect between the climate of communication and silence behaviour is consistent with the spiral of Silence Theory [8], [22], [35], which studies the influence of the communication climate on silence behaviour. Secondly, this study shows a positive direct effect between appearance attraction and silence behaviour. Finding that appearance attraction encourages staff not to voice any ideas or suggestions and tend to show silence behaviour [8]. Thirdly, the positive direct effect between extrovert-introvert Personality and silence behaviour shows that individuals with extrovert characters often dare to speak out to convey opinions and ideas. Empirically, the findings of this study are in line with the findings of the previous study [3],[17]. Agree that the personality of the individual exerts influence in the job, that is when employees with extroverted personalities are more popular and widespread in the organisation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the knowledge management literature by studying antecedents that predict silence behaviour among employees working in multinational organisations. Practically contribute to the management of the organisation, especially human resource management. The findings of this study can help the organisation's administrators better understand each employee's uniqueness and its importance in the successful administration of an organisation.

### 5. Conclusion

There are some limitations that need to be considered in understanding this study's findings. First, the study used non-probability sampling, so the generalisation of the results was limited and used to represent samples conducted around the Klang Valley only. Future studies could involve a more extensive sample covering the entire industry involved with German organisations in Malaysia. In summary, this study helps top management understand the purpose of interaction and how to select employees that can be adapted to the subordinate (employee) and superior (immediate superior) requirements. Employee positions can also be reconsidered, for example, placing individuals with characteristic features of extroverts at the inquiry counter and individuals with introverted characteristics assigned to the operation of a machine or computer. This is important for the success of an organisation that starts from all levels or groups of employees.

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