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Assertiveness Behavior and Organizational Climate among Workers in a Multinational Company in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study empirically analyses the relationship between the dimensions of assertiveness behavior with organizational Climate among workers in a multinational company in Malaysia. Hence, this study was conducted to determine the potential effects of assertiveness behavior on organizational Climate. A total of 57 respondents were chosen to participate in this study based on the quantitative approach. Two methods were used as part of the measurements, including The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule, which measures the assertiveness dimensions mentioned in this study. The questionnaire will then be used to measure the organizational Climate. Interestingly, the organizational climate level shared different results.

Keywords: Assertiveness, Organizational Climate, Multinational Company

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1.0 Introduction

The influence of employee behavior on the organizational environment will have a comprehensive effect on the organizational climate (Agjebule et al., 2021, Patterson, Warr, & West, 2004). Whether the employee leads to positive or negative behavior, it would still impact the organizational climate. On the other hand, Mishra and Tikoria (2021) stated that the organizational culture impacts the productivity of an organization through behavior that the organization itself created from the organizational climate. To add to the discussion, Agjebule et al. (2021) further highlighted that organizational climate allows for positive economic effects such as increased commitments and cooperation of its members, job satisfaction, and preferable decision-making. Their research argued that when we are questioned on organizational climate, we might provide answers such as: "what is done in the organization, the normal happenings that occur every day in the organizational environment," or perhaps we might state that the organizational climate is what formed the cornerstone for the primary value of the organization or organizational attributes. As time moves from past to present, many researchers believe that employees are part of the crucial elements when it is dealing with their working environment as this will have an impact on their work behaviors and attitudes which in the end lead to the organization's climate (Mehralian et al., 2020). However, Smith (2003) emphasized that organizational climate underlines a group of organizational members who assume they should have the same value in shaping their

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cooperation with the external environment. In addition, it also involves their way of thinking, how they perceive whenever problems arise in the organization, and ways to solve the problem. On the other hand, Zahid and Nauman (2023) also provided their insights on organizational values contributing to an organizational climate: organizational ethics, commitment, integrity, positive behavior, courtesy, leadership, action orientation, and quality services and products.

In addition, organizational climate also increases employees' commitment to achieving the organization's mission (Fainshmidt & Frazier, 2017). They also help and reinforce the 'standard' of employees in an organization by stating the culture of the organization that would bring a profound impact and creates the roots that make the climate of an organization remain a culture, which is the behavior of members in the organization shaped by the term assertiveness. Assertiveness refers to bold behavior to express an opinion (Ibrahim, 2023). He added that to act on one's interests, defend oneself without fear, express one's views honestly and at ease, or stand up by respecting others without infringing on their rights; one must be assertive (Ibrahim, 2023). Alberti and Emmons backed the statement in their early research in 2001. Therefore, current study intends to explore the understanding of assertiveness behavior and the importance of organizational climate as it helps shape and develop the identity of employees who belong to an organization. This is because it is believed that every employee will feel proud of the identity being portrayed. Thus, the primary intention of the current research is to address two main research questions. What is the level of organizational climate and the assertiveness behavior among the employees in the organization? Do the dimensions of assertiveness behavior, the right to respect and be respected, the right to feel and have feelings, the right to make mistakes, the right to say no, and the right to question and communicate influence the organizational climate? When we mentioned assertiveness, Malaysian society might feel that this concept is relatively new to be practiced. However, Western society is used to behaving assertively and having no issues expressing their rights. Thus, this paper explores the level of assertiveness behavior and organizational climate. The objective is to identify the relationship between assertiveness behavior dimensions and organizational climate in a multinational company in Malaysia.

2.0 Literature Review

Below is a detailed discussion based on evidence and critics from past studies on assertiveness and organization climate.

2.1 Assertiveness Behaviour

Assertive behavior is defined by Antonia et al. (2021) as an honest and legitimate expression of one's personal opinions, needs, wants, and feelings without denying or violating the rights (Alberti & Emmons, 2001) of others. They justified their finding's assertiveness behavior have proved to improve leadership and communicative skills and enable more effective management. Anna Luzio-Lockett (1995) stated that assertiveness is the behavior that involves two-way communication and stating what is wanted clearly, and dealing with other individuals without denying their rights. Stubbs (1985) explained that assertiveness is a behavior that voices or expresses the rights of an individual in addition to respecting the feelings and rights of other individuals. Rathus and Nevid (1986), on the other hand, stated that assertive behavior is a behavior that expresses true feelings, balances rights, and shows social skills. Meanwhile, Caputo (1984) asserted that assertiveness includes five fundamental individual rights, namely, the right to be respected, the right to feel and express feelings, the right to make mistakes, the right to say no, and finally, the right to ask questions. Phau and Sari (2004) explained that assertive behavior would not involve violent actions defending rights. While (Wood & Robertson, 1997) argued that organizational members who behave assertively are in the proactive and rational group. In this study, assertiveness would be seen to the extent whereby the individual can be firm, express their rights honestly without offending any other parties, and communicate and adapt in the organizational environment while defending his rights positively.

2.2 Assertiveness Theory

Assertiveness can be defined as the ability to speak up, which is critical for organizational and individual success (Pfrombeck et al., 2023). It encompasses everyone having the right to respect and speak up for themselves, as stated in the Assertiveness Theory (Alberti & Emmons, 2001), so people need to learn how to be assertive. This theory emphasizes the ability of humans to assert themselves, which has been given to the right to act in any manner that comforts themselves and considers others' rights. They also agreed that while some employees speak up, others hesitate to voice their concerns and needs.

2.3 Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is a system of shared values, beliefs, and habits in an organization related to a formal structure to produce norms and behaviors. The most recent difficulty for humans across the globe is comprehending climate change effects (Abbas et al., 2023). It is also referred to as the result of the interpretation by employees of notions, values, beliefs, and philosophies, which then forms the Climate they feel (Agiebule et al., 2021). Apart from that, Fainshmidt and Frazier (2017) also defined organizational climate as a system that has the same values and is understood by all groups in the organization and, at the same time, maintains its identity to ensure the organization's primary strategy. This was further agreed by Smith (2003), who concluded that organizational culture is the climate of the organization itself, which covers everything the organization members do and its central values. The Human Resources department and senior management play an essential role in the workforce's well-being (Napoles et al., 2023). These assumptions will also be formed according to their experience in the organization and the importance of giving new organizational members an understanding of the basic assumptions. Organizational climate is also said to be a system with its form and values that all organization members share, as well as successfully accepting changes and managing relationships (Zahid & Nauman, 2023). It also considers two main components: shared values that form group behaviors in organizations and organizational norms that act as guides in controlling and accepting

appropriate behavior (Mishra & Tikoria, 2021). Thus, this study will define organizational culture, which includes the shared belief system with organizational members sufficient for organizational climate aspects.

2.4 Organizational Climate Theory

The organizational climate theory summarizes four primary critical constructs: productivity, competitive advantage, merger, and leadership direction in the organizational culture adapted by Andrew (1997).

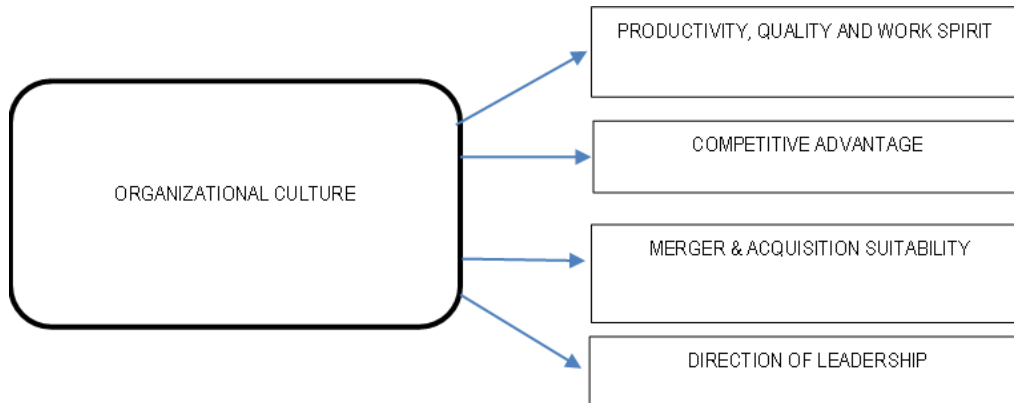


Fig. 1: Effects and Implications of Organizational Climate
(Source: Andrew 1997)

In light of the above explanation, the organizational climate is strongly tied to how each views the social environment of the organization and how that environment influences the organization's behavior. Referring to Fig1, depending on the organization's strength, the climate of an organization will impact the effectiveness of an organization's cultural journey. Organizational members who highly depend on the organizational climate will adopt the existing culture without interrupting existing culture. Meanwhile, organization members with a weak cultural grip will only provide a basic overview of the direction. A stable organization will aid the organization in giving a positive and dynamic image to other organizations. The conduct, attitudes, and feelings of the people working in an organization are called organizational climate (Ependi, Purnomo, and Siswandi, 2020).

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative approach (Lim et al.,2022) to establish the possible effects of assertiveness behavior on organizational climate. This study examines the relationship between the dimensions of assertiveness behavior; the right to respect and be respected, the right to feel and have feelings, the right to make mistakes, the right to say no, and the right to question and communicate with organizational climate among workers in a multinational company in Johor, Malaysia. The sampling frame consisted of all 57 employees (Mohd et al., 2022) in the multinational company. This company was chosen on the basis of to solve the research question implied. The MNC is based on Japanese management as its headquarters is in Japan and its Board of Directors also consists of Japanese people. Therefore, this study will investigate whether the organizational climate level would lead to applying Japanese cultural characteristics and being adapted and adopted into the Malaysian organizational culture. In addition, this study will also identify the level of assertive behavior practiced by the organization. Based on quantitative data (Saad et al.,2022), such as descriptive and multivariate analyses, 57 respondents were chosen to participate in this study. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) (Rathus, 1973) measures the mentioned assertiveness dimensions, and the organizational climate was assessed using a questionnaire [modified from Taylor & Bowers,1972]. SPSS tabulated and analyzed the questionnaire data (Keen et al.,2022).

4.0 Findings

The finding starts by describing the study's demographic and then proceeds with the primary correlation analysis to answer the research objective.

4.1 Respondent's Demographic Data

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

No	Type	f	%	
1	Gender	Male	29	50.9
		Female	28	49.1
2	Age (years old)	21-30	28	49.1
		31-40	27	47.4
		41-50	2	3.5
3	Years of experiences	0-2	10	17.5

3-5	13	22.8
6-10	23	40.4
11 years above	11	19.3

N=57

In this study, the number of male respondents is slightly higher (50.9%) compared to female respondents (49.1), with a total of 57 respondents consisting of the total population of the organization. The employees in this organization are mostly 21 to 30 years old (49.1%) and 31 to 40 years old, representing 27 employees, and only two employees (3.5%) in the range of 41 to 50 years old. With regards to age, 23 respondents (40.4%) have 6 to 10 years of working experience in the organization, followed by 13 respondents (22.8%) and 11 respondents (19.3%) having more than 11 years of working experience.

4.2 Identifying Organizational Climate and Assertiveness Behaviour Levels of MNC Organizational Members

Table 2. Classification Level Based on Mean Scores

Level	Mean Score
Low	1.00 to 2.33
Moderate	2.34 to 3.67
High	3.68 to 5.00

(Sources: Scandura and Williams, 2000)

Table 3. Mean Score Analysis for Organizational Climate and Assertiveness Behavior

Variables	Mean	Level
Organizational Climate	3.70	High
Assertiveness Behavior	3.23	Moderate

The first point of referral was on the classification level based on mean scores (Table 2). Then the finding proceeds to analyze the mean score analysis, which can be referred to in Table 2 with a record of organizational climate having a high mean score value. This implies that every department has its plan," stating that measuring organizational climate requires the experience of organizational members to experience the values and processes being implemented. This is necessary for the organization's members to comprehend what is being communicated by the management organization. However, the lowest mean score for the organizational climate dimension as those who disagreed with the statement, "my department obtains complete information about things happening in other departments." To answer the research questions and objectives, this analysis discovered that the level of assertiveness behavior is at a moderate level while it is in contrast to the high level of organizational culture in the organization.

4.3 Relationship between Assertiveness Behavior Dimensions and Organizational Climate

Table 4. Result of Correlation

Assertiveness Behavior Dimensions	Mean	Organizational Climate (t)	Std. Deviation	Level
The right to respect and be respected	3.07	0.07	0.27	Moderate
The right to feel and have feelings	3.40	0.19	0.37	Moderate
The right to make mistakes	3.25	0.09	0.37	Moderate
The right to say no	3.12	0.04	0.4	Moderate
The right to question and communicate	3.23	0.14	0.34	Moderate

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The results from Table 4 show statistically no significant values verifying the effect of the right to be respected, the right to feel and express feelings, the right to make mistakes, the right to say no, and finally, the right to ask questions about organizational climate, thus, did not support the relationship between the assertiveness behavior dimensions with organizational climate. Based on the correlational analysis done, all the construct test shows a weak relationship (Salkind, 2009). Furthermore, the findings also showed all the dimensions of assertiveness behavior at a moderate level.

4.0 Discussion

The first set of analyses examined the level of assertiveness behavior and organizational climate. The most exciting aspect of these findings is that most of the respondents are working more than three years in the organization. The organizational climate at the highest-level value for the mean score analysis. This is based on the organizational culture implemented by the Japanese management, where their priority lies on the workforce and productivity itself. The organization has critical goals to build, strengthen, and develop human resources for future needs. Seyyed et al. (2020) insisted that a thorough and comprehensive communication process from the top-down and bottom-up process with a systematic information flow implementation plan would help channel information in parallel with the needs of each department in the organization.

In comparison, Ependi et al. (2020) added that the characteristics of organizations that consider shared values, behavior, and trust also portrayed an image of an MNC as a comprehensive organization concerned with the dignity and image of the organization. Moving on to the assertiveness behavior level in this organization, the value shown did not reflect the same organizational climate. According

to Jacob et al. (2023), assertive behavior makes it possible to ask questions about the inappropriateness if we are unsure why someone misbehaves. Non-assertive behaviors will lead individuals to feel fear of inquiring, even if it is to uncover the truth. It is now necessary to discuss the assertiveness behavior level among the employees. This study discovered that the MNC's organization members were still hesitant to express their desires. Although implementing a high organizational climate was parallel with applying Japanese culture, the study's outcome discovered that respondents representing Malaysians were still reserved and shy to speak the truth and offend others. Compared to the level of assertiveness and the organizational climate of the MNC's organizational members, it was apparent, which clearly showed that the socio-culture of Malaysian society was still being practiced. Therefore, this study's alignment between these two variables led to more questions. This result is counterintuitive. Interestingly, there were no significant effects between the assertiveness behavior dimensions and organizational climate.

The organization needs to realize that there were also findings that stated the welfare of employees was not taken seriously, and there were communication problems and imbalanced information flow to other departments. Next, the organization also needs to distinguish that the recognition system and respect for the members of its organization need to be implemented comprehensively to overcome the issue of dissatisfaction. This interpretation contrasts with the organization's efforts in successfully providing opportunities for the employees to optimize their abilities and skills for career development. The organization had also successfully demonstrated committed management leadership in providing training and guidance to organizational members. This is further reinforced by Elango and Srinivas's (2022) study, which stated that organizational climate elements need to be included in human resource policies to achieve success and be in parallel with the ethics of organizational professionalism. The ability to assert without feeling fear in the organization was the possible explanation for the results. This study has yet to demonstrate that organizational climates affect assertiveness behaviors. The employer's perception also depends on the employee's behavior (Mat et al., 2021). Thus, this finding was unexpected and highlighted that the organizational climate went strong, whereas the employees' attitudes were not influenced by the culture adopted in the organization.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has described that the behavior of organizational members will differ as, logically, human beings were built differently from one another. The difference in behavior is not due to each member of the organization having their thoughts and influencing others but based on the results that they controlled their thoughts. Organizational climate is a descriptive conceptual element in which organizational productivity significantly impacts control, support, effort, work quality, and organizational formalization changes. Apart from that, organizational behavior has formed values and togetherness collectively to form a balanced behavior. Assertive organizational members come to express their feelings, ideas, and beliefs without insulting and belittling other individuals. A harmonious organization has proven that consensus and achieving organizational goals could be implemented successfully if culture application is balanced. Therefore, the organization needs to look into organizational climate aspects to improve the organizational environment. However, this study found that despite the high level of organizational climate, the assertiveness behavior through the dimensions of the right to be respected, the right to feel and express feelings, the right to make mistakes, the right to say no, and finally the right to ask questions in moderate level. Taken together, the evidence from this study suggests that organizations should play significant roles in providing a platform for employees to feel part of their system. These findings help us understand that even if we work for the same organization and share the same values, that does not change how the employees behave. In future investigations, it might be possible to add job design and leadership apart of the organizational climate to enhance the relationship. Further work is required to establish the viability of assertive behavior in a multinational company.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This study can enhance the understanding of assertiveness behavior to establish practicality in organizational communication. This study will support the embarking of skills in professionals and creating communicative culture. Furthermore, the climate in the organization is now in trend with post-pandemic survival. Therefore, this paper will explore the potential of maintaining harmonious organization.

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