

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION IN MALAYSIAN WORKPLACE: EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES VIA ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION CLIMATE THEORY

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Abstract. This study investigates how transparency is practiced in workplace communication among employees in Malaysia. Guided by three dimensions of organizational transparency, disclosure, clarity, and accuracy and the Communication Climate Theory, this research explores how information is shared, understood, and validated in diverse organizational settings. Through qualitative interviews with 15 Malaysian employees across various industries, the study uncovers key themes that illustrate how transparency is perceived and experienced. Findings revealed that disclosure is facilitated through feedback and information platforms, with variations in practices such as complete, gradual, or biased information sharing. Clarity, or lucidity, was influenced by language use, generational and cultural differences, and communication modes, with preferences for clear, jargon-free language and face-to-face interactions. Accuracy was typically linked to adherence to organizational policies and reliance on experienced personnel. While employees valued transparent practices, they also acknowledged inconsistencies, particularly in hierarchical or top-down environments. These insights suggest that transparency, while highly valued, remains inconsistently applied due to organizational culture, communication strategies, and leadership models. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how transparency affects employee trust, satisfaction, and workplace engagement in a Malaysian context and highlights the importance of cultivating open communication practices to enhance organizational health and effectiveness.

Keywords: *employee perceptions, Malaysian organizations, organizational transparency, transparent communication, workplace communication*

Introduction

Organizations can no longer afford to squander the potential of their employees since doing so could put their company at risk in the highly competitive business world of today (Dutta et al., 2025). With that being said, it is important that organizations inculcate positive communication culture to create supportive work environments that foster organizational and personal growth in a sustainable, humanistic manner. Furthermore, it is with high importance to develop and maintain positive relationships with employees as they are valuable assets to an organization. One of the most crucial life skills to master that plays a role in positive workplace culture is effective communication skills (Men et al., 2022). The definition of communication is the exchange or transmission of information for the purpose of knowing more and mutual understanding between two or more people (Heeter, 2023). It can also be defined as the practice or procedure of conveying thoughts and feelings or imparting knowledge to others. Malaysia has been found to face several issues with communication in their workforce environment. This is supported by a study by Ahmad Tajuddin et al. (2022) who found that there are hurdles in the communication culture of Malaysian

organizations which have heavily prevented the great performance and potential of employees. They suggested that Malaysian organizations integrate different modes of communication into its intercultural training for them to be able to grow and improve. With that being said, this study will explore a more in-depth type of communication that must be employed which is transparent communication.

There are various ways to describe transparency. Transparent communication can be simply defined as the perceived quality of information that has been delivered voluntarily by a sender (Hopp and Fisher, 2021). Ethics, trust, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) have all been linked to transparency (Sujata, 2025). The goal of transparent communication is to strengthen an organization and the individuals who work there by being open and honest in the sharing of information. For instance, the board of directors may present the company's vision to the entire team, or employees from each department could openly express their own thoughts. It can be established by anybody in the organization working together to create and uphold a workplace culture that prioritizes effective and open communication. Adopting a culture of open, honest communication inside an organization can have countless advantages for both the team and the company. Therefore, in order for employees to operate efficiently and productively, organizations must put into place measures that will aid in improving workplace communication such as transparency. The improvement of communication fosters a "safe" workplace where workers can express their ideas and engage in original thought. Because of this, businesses all over the world have tried to apply various methods for enhancing workplace communication and transparency.

Recent years have seen a significant interest in the role transparency plays in organizations. Even though some aspects of communication in an organization are governed by laws and policies, some issues can still be addressed or communicated. However, the necessity for honest and transparent communication by organizations have arisen due to the increase of misleading practices such as ostracism, corruption or even data leakage. While communication technology and the internet has allowed for such misleading practices of organizations to lessen, it has also changed the standards for greater communication transparency (Galletta, et al., 2024). In essence, a lot of research about open and transparent communication in the workplace has been conducted worldwide. However, little attention has been paid to analyse the occurrence of transparent communication among workplace employees in Malaysia, the factors that influence transparent communication and how the lack of transparency can affect an organization's employees in the Malaysian context. Although it has long been believed that openness and transparency in communication culture can lead to advantageous outcomes, very little empirical study has been done to specifically look into why employees do or do not practice this specific type of communication within their walls. Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap in analysing transparent communication in workplaces in Malaysia to enrich the current data in the mentioned field. To address such limitations, it is essential that organizations implement transparency in the workplace so that in return, organizations are compelled to be more aware of the benefits and outcomes of communicating openly. In conjunction to this, this study intends to identify how transparency is used in communication in the workplace.

Literature review

Transparent communication is still exceedingly crucial in this day and age of information overload and scepticism since it is the cornerstone of establishing trust,

authenticity, and the pillars of an increasingly just and open society. As the world prioritizes moral behavior and rewards companies that seek to bring about positive change, transparency has become more crucial than ever. This research is underpinned by two complementary theory perspectives namely the Communication Climate Theory by James and Jones (1974) and Schnackenberg et al. (2021) Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency. The Communication Climate theory focuses on the quality of communications and how it influences the climate of an organizations whereas Schnackenberg et al. (2021) Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency is used to understand how transparency is employed through different dimensions such as the disclosure of information, the clarity of information as well as the accuracy of information shared or received. By utilising both theories in this study, it aims to explore the multifaceted nature of implementing transparency in communication within the workplace in Malaysia, bringing light to how organizations use transparency, what influences or hinders it and what effects it causes on employees if there were a lack of transparency in communication.

Early studies have explored the importance of open and transparent communication. Sameer (2024) discovered in her study that open communication is strongly associated with motivation, self-assurance and pride among employees. Moreover, a study investigating the needs of the current generation in the workplace found that millennials are still advocating for free and open communication (Chopra and Bilare, 2020). However, although employee-organization relations are favourably correlated with open communication cultures, the upper management has received comparatively little attention as an organizational leader who could model, encourage, or obstruct transparent communication among employees (Kim, 2017). Despite looking seemingly simple, transparent communication can be challenging. The harsh reality is that when the truth is unfavourable or makes us look terrible, people have a tendency to avoid it. Being transparent is especially difficult in the absence of trust which requires more time to build. Hence, employees frequently keep their opinions, worries, or suggestions to themselves and this leads to a communication culture of secrecy. Vulnerability is a must for transparency since you cannot predict how others will utilize the information you offer (Ananny and Crawford, 2018). In other words, not only does transparency build trust among employees in the workplace, it also requires trust for it to actually be practiced. In her interview with Jiang and Shen (2023), Audra, the Head of Strategic Initiatives of Fave, mentioned that managers should allow open communication and trust in the working relationship, especially when it comes to where the business is heading, what it expects to accomplish in the next one to two years, and how each employee can contribute to future achievements.

Malaysia has experienced several occasions where lack of transparency has become an issue among its citizens such as the previous 1MDB scandal and current MRT3 project. Given the situation, it is time that researchers look into the causes of why the lack of transparency is happening so that solutions can be made to minimize this problem. According to Jalli and Idris (2023), a virus that has infiltrated every aspect of Malaysians' life is the lack of transparency and responsibility on the part of those in positions of influence and authority. As a result, there is a culture of carelessness toward unethical behaviour and Malaysia's culture of corruption continues to be fueled. A recent survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers titled 'PwC's Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2022', sought to examine how Malaysians felt about work in the current climate of no economic instability and rippling effects of Covid-19. The

findings revealed that 65% of Malaysian employees demand more transparency from their organizations on its impact on things such as taxes, wages and worker health and safety. To put things in a greater perspective, a study explored in particular, the voice of Malaysian employees and how dissent is expressed in an organization. The findings showed that the majority of employees in the organization were not happy with their workplace specifically on how they communicate with higher management. They were unable to communicate their worries and issues to those with the authority to alter their current situation and working conditions through the appropriate channels. The survey on management and communication style displayed results that inferred employees' dissatisfaction at work to do with the senior management's communication style as being closed to recommendations, conservative, disrespectful, and indifferent to staff grievances. This is in line with previous study, who found in his study that to guarantee that employees stay with their organization longer and feel content with their duties, organizations need to improve the quality of communication at all levels of hierarchy.

Materials and Methods

This study employed the qualitative research method in explaining how transparent communication is used in the workplace, the factors that influence or hinder transparent communication among employees in the workplace and the effects of lack of transparency on employees. This approach was employed for this study because this study attempts to explore respondents' perspectives and draw conclusions based on one's responses (Nardi, 2018). The data collected through qualitative research will be able to present accurate and relevant answers. This research design was underpinned by two theoretical frameworks namely the Communication Climate Theory and Schnackenberg et al. (2021) Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency with hopes that the research objectives will be answered. This study employed purposive sampling in order to select the most relevant sample to be analysed. Purposive sampling which is also known as judgement sampling, involves selecting sources on purpose based on their attributes (Thomas, 2022). The more strategically or purposely chosen the samples are in relation to the topic, the more comprehensive and meaningful the data will be (Morse and Clark 2019). The researcher carried out this study with 15 Malaysian employees who were purposely chosen and voluntarily participated in an open-ended interview session. The samples were chosen based on several criterias to gain the qualitative data which was a Malaysian employee from a vast range of industries, aged 23 to 50 and has more than 1 year of work experience. In this study, to get the appropriate data needed, an open ended interview was employed. The intention of employing open-ended interview questions is to elicit information and insight from participants that may not be directly observed (Portugal, 2023).

The instruments used to collect data were carefully crafted interview questions constructed based on two frameworks, namely the Communication Climate Theory by James and Jones (1974) and Schnackenberg et al. (2021) Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency. This is because both frameworks are aligned with the objectives of this study. The questionnaire comprised of twenty questions divided into three sections in order to achieve all three research objectives. Each section represents one research question and all twenty questions were asked during the interview along with prompting questions which allowed for more in-depth detail about the experiences of the employees. A good standardized open-ended interview requires researchers to use

probes so that the interview session can flow naturally and conversations are more genuine (Thomas, 2022). Interview transcripts of 15 employees from various organizations were analysed to obtain an in-depth assessment of the different ways transparency in communication is employed in the workplace, the factors that influence or hinder it and the effects of lack of transparency on the employees. Prior to starting the phase of collecting data in this qualitative study, all required ethical considerations were fulfilled and ethical approval was obtained from the faculty, Academy of Language Studies. A critical component of guaranteeing the ethical conduct of this research is obtaining informed consent of every respondent. Respondents were informed of the study's objectives, the interview process and voluntary nature of participation. Moreover, participants were guaranteed that the study would maintain the confidentiality of their identities. The interviews were recorded with permission after asking for consent from the interviewees. With that being said, pseudonyms were used in the interview transcripts in place of their actual names. Data collected such as audio or video recordings were safely preserved for a predetermined amount of time before being deleted.

Data was collected through the transcription of in-depth interviews with 15 respondents. The interview with respondents was conducted online through Google Meet for approximately one hour and thirty minutes each. The longest interview time was two hours for one of the respondents. As the interview was recorded, the transcripts of the interviews were then written. Then, to analyse the qualitative data, the transcripts were imported to the NVivo Software and the analysis by coding sentences and phrases began. An inductive thematic analysis was carried out to identify, analyse and interpret the patterns of meaning within the qualitative data gathered. Codes that were created represent themes and concepts in the collected data. After the recurring patterns were found, the themes were developed and a codebook was created. Further changes were made with the assistance of an expert in this field. Every research must include both validity and reliability. A good research must show what is genuinely true, and a valid tool or measure must accurately reflect what it is intended to measure. Research validity is concerned with the integrity and correctness of scientific results. The consistency, stability, and repetition of the informant's stories, as well as the capacity of the investigators to gather and record information effectively, are all factors that affect reliability. It speaks to a study method's capacity to provide the same outcomes throughout numerous testing intervals with a high degree of consistency.

In this study, validity and reliability was ensured by reviewing the interview questions and collecting data for validation by an expert in this field. On the other hand, triangulation was also employed to enhance the validity and reliability of this study. By utilizing data triangulation and theoretical triangulation, researcher made sure the study was not primarily reliant on one source or one set of theoretical assumptions. Data triangulation in this research means collecting data through interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding of what employees in Malaysia personally experience in regards to transparency in communication. On the other hand, theoretical triangulation in this study involves the use of two frameworks in understanding the collected data. With that being said, the researcher could avoid bias when interpreting the data. The incorporation of these triangulation techniques emphasised the reliability of the research, strengthened the credibility of the conclusions, and offered a comprehensive viewpoint on the study. Furthermore, the coding process during the data analysis was validated by experts in the field.

Results and Discussion

As mentioned in the research methodology, the analysis of the study was done by categorising the phrases/dialogue of the interviewee into several themes. The themes were chosen and categorised with reference to Schnakenberg's Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency. From the result, three themes were generated under the purpose namely exposure, lucidity, and correctness.

Exposure

The first category is exposure, which is the act of revealing or informing others about any information. According to Schnakenberg's Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency, disclosure guarantees that individuals or organizations are open and honest in their organizations whether it be related to financial interests or any other relevant details that should be known to maintain relationships or assist in decision-making at the workplace. In the context of communication transparency, feedback is closely linked to exposure. This is because feedback is known as the sharing of information regarding one's behaviour or performance. During the interviews, one subject that was repeatedly surfaced by the interviewees was the practice of feedback in the workplace that fosters open communication. This was shown in the examples from the interview below.

"Feedback will be given on every task that I have submitted." (R1)

"we are very open in terms of giving feedback or to address concerns." (R3)

"we are able to understand each other's jobs and help each other which is important for the workplace and our work is related. When we are together more, we are open to feedback." (R13)

Another crucial component of exposure that builds on the foundation of transparency inside a company other than feedback is the usage of information platforms. These platforms act as the hub for information distribution, allowing employees to have access to thorough and open flow of information. As mentioned by two interviewees, they provided insight on how the information platforms utilised by their organization allowed for smooth disclosure of information in their workplace. This can be seen in the examples below.

"Every month we have events so in Basecamp.com we literally use it as a information dump and no information is left out. So anyone can just refer from there, like choose the event and click on what you need to know like who the sponsors are, how many tickets have been sold and literally everything you need to know." (R8)

"Everything is on Notion, so basically that's how they cover the information that the organization needs and how everyone gets to access the information." (R10)

Other interviewees highlighted receiving complete disclosure of information within their organization but without solely relying on information platforms. This means that their organization embraces the several channels and practices that add to a

comprehensive understanding of organizational information, going beyond the usage of information platforms.

“My colleagues give enough information that was needed.” (R2)

“My boss gave me an orientation that encompassed like a bit of information overload, but he was very transparent with all the history of the company and what he thinks about the working culture past and present was like and what he expected from me.” (R4)

“They are always keeping me informed.” (R15)

The examples above show that in terms of information exposure, the interviewees are usually always informed on whatever information is shared by their colleagues. It can be seen that their colleagues go the extra mile to include every necessary detail relevant to the interviewee. While for some interviewees, complete disclosure is a norm in their workplace, other interviewees find themselves navigating a different dynamic, namely gradual disclosure. This is seen by the responses given by interviewees below.

“When it comes to urgent projects with short dues, my organization will make sure I understand the things I would do by giving small amounts of work to start with and increasing it after I get the hang of it.” (R1)

“They tend to give minimal instructions, knowing that I already knew what to do.”(R1)

“My boss likes to reply with statements that would spark even more questions. In a way, the conversation that we have on the topic pushes me to figure out the answers.” (R5)

“I can't fully get 100% of the answers from my boss. She will let me explore the reasoning and methods by giving guidance or tutorials.” (R6)

“They only give like 60% of information about what you'll be doing in your job scope for the company and the rest of it you will need to experience it for you to be able to master it.” (R14)

The examples above collectively highlight that information given by colleagues, though not completely disclosed, is progressive as to allow the interviewees to gain practical experience and knowledge from real-world challenges. However, a number of interviewees unfortunately face instance where transparency in communication is known to be biased disclosure.

“My organization doesn't really promote open communication that allows equal information for all employees. I do believe that they only give the necessary information to the related employees.” (R1)

“I usually acquire more new information from my colleagues than from the leader.”(R1)

“But there was also few instances where theres information for example, this one technique we can use, but it’s shared to only a few people. When that happens, I don’t safeel like it’s reliable and trustworthy. Because when the information is spread to only certain people and not share it with everyone” (R7)

“Communication transparency in the organization does not meet my standard because information that I obtain is usually from my colleagues and not from my superior when my superior is the one giving instruction but expect me to get the job done without explaining in detail what I have to do.” (R12)

“Top management is usually the ones who make decisions without communicating with the lower management.” (R12)

The statements above show that there are concerns about limited exposure being catered to only a specific individual as stated by interviewee 1, 7 and 12. Interviewee 1 and 12 further state that transparency in communication is only received from their colleagues when they expect more transparency coming from the top management as well.

Lucidity

One of the three aspects of transparency, according to Schnackenberg et al. (2021) Three Dimensions of Organizational Transparency, is clarity. Similarly, the theme "lucidity" describes the state of being clear, understandable, and straightforward. Precision in transparency fosters comprehension and lessens the possibility of misunderstandings. It guarantees a simplified presentation of information that is shared or presented and makes sure that the information is in an understandable manner and also ties closely to transparency in communication. When asked about how much lucidity is involved in the transparency of the communication in the workplace, one interviewee mentioned about the struggle of social differences.

“Because like all of us are from different majors, different experiences, different backgrounds. So we all tend to perceive things differently. It's not that easy when communicating with them. Like a large factor in my company would be the generation gap.” (R4)

Interviewee 4 stated that despite there being transparency in the communication taking place at the workplace, she finds lucidity to be slightly difficult due to differences between her colleagues, specifically the generation gap and other social differences such as their majors, experiences and backgrounds. This shows that in terms of transparency, clarity is low. On the other hand, several interviewees voiced out positive statements on transparency in terms of lucidity that was related to vocabulary and sentence structure. This can be seen in the examples shown below.

“My colleagues would help to explain all the terms they usually use before explaining things to me to make sure I can easily follow what they are saying.” (R1)

“The information presented is understandable because she will explain it in a simple way that is easy to understand.” (R2)

“They use clear, concise language and avoid excessive technical jargon.” (R4)

“The marketing manager listed the answer in full sentences for my comprehension... my manager has dismissed using jargon words to help me visualize or understand better of what is being discussed.” (R5)

“We also prefer to discuss the items in more relaxing ways and not too formal. So I don’t feel compelled to share my point of view every time we have a discussion, and any misunderstandings can be avoided...it’s clear and easy to understand when they avoid giving ambiguous information but take a very straightforward answer.”(R6)

“They tend to use the laymans term, I think it’s a habit of theirs because they know that us as their subordinate, we may not comprehend the jargon or the terms that they therapist know.” (R7)

“They use the language that they can understand and we can understand. So it’s win-win situation, like using simple language, simple communication where everyone else can understand. It’s easier that way.” (R8)

“My colleagues take the time to tailor their explanations to my level of understanding when explaining new concepts to me.” (R11)

“...it’s easy for me to comprehend when they explain in layman terms or provide photos and diagrams for me to refer to.” (R12)

“I think it’s when they mix business terms with linear terms so it isn’t too formal and very understandable.” (R14)

“They are usually very easy to understand and they use decorative sentences, common words and they are straightforward. They don’t beat around the bush, they straight away say what they need to say.” (R14)

From the above examples, it can be seen that the majority of the interviewees are satisfied with the lucidity of information from their colleagues due to their use of vocabulary and sentence structure. Interviewee 2, 4, 5, 7, and 12, especially emphasize on the avoidance of excessive use of jargon by their colleagues. This means that instead, layman terms are used to enhance understanding in communication. Similarly, interviewees 1, 6 and 14 explained how clarity in their communication in the workplace is high due to colleagues using simple and straightforward language when conveying information. Interviewees 8 and 11 emphasized on how their colleagues put more effort in showing lucidity by tailoring explanations towards the listener, enhancing the probability that the information shared will be more efficiently absorbed, processed, and understood. Furthermore, three interviewees stated mode of communication to be a

helpful strategy of lucidity in transparent communication. The examples can be found below.

“I will get partnered with my senior colleague to have that 1-on-1 training on the new project” (R1)

“My boss prefers explaining the information face to face rather than over the phone and in messages because this helps me to understand better.” (R2)

“If it’s official or done face-to-face, the comprehensibility will be clearer or better because it’s done together and most importantly, there will be question and answer.”(R7)

As can be seen in the examples above, interviewees 1, 2 and 7 stated that face-to-face or 1-on-1 communication is used by the information provider in order to convey information in a more direct and understandable way. Interviewee 7 further states that is beneficial for her as it allows for there to be a question-and-answer session which only allows for better clarity. Moreover, the language used also contributes to the lucidity of information in transparent communication. This can be seen from the examples shown below.

“Since all of my colleagues are Malay, so they use Malay language in the office and the language is easy for us to understand and comprehensible.” (R2)

“I use Malay language with my colleagues and English with my boss.” (R3)

“Anyone who can speak three or four languages, they will try to use our native language which is in Sarawak, Bahasa Melayu Sarawak.” (R7)

“I can easily understand the language because we usually just communicate in Malay and English.” (R9)

“They use language I can easily follow which is Malay and English. So it was easy for me to understand and I could contribute to the discussion.” (R15)

The following statements capture the linguistic dynamics of a multiracial nation such as Malaysia, where people adjust and manage their language choices according to the multilingual nature of the society. With that being said, the common languages used in promoting clarity among employees are Malay and English. Furthermore, when asked about how transparency is used in communication in the context of lucidity, several interviewees stated that their colleagues would provide demonstration and examples when conveying information. This can be seen in the following statements below.

“They would also come directly to my place to demonstrate how to do things My colleagues tend to demonstrate step by step, not only with words but also visually.”(R1)

“There was this one time where I was quite unclear about a program so she explained it to be step-by-step and one-by-one so I won’t make a mistake” (R2)

“So they really make sure that I know the details of how it looks, of what these materials will look from the supplier so they give me the full details and examples.”(R3)

“I find it very easy to understand when they show me the example of the documents that is similar to the task that i’m doing and when they explain in detail on how I need to finish the task accordingly.” (R9)

“She effectively demonstrated the steps involved by using a previous year's letter and email as a clear visual aid.” (R11)

“I would say that it is very clear because he was showing me his PC and from his computer how he does his work” (R13)

By offering precise instances or scenarios that allow minimal opportunity for misunderstanding, demonstrations and examples assist in reducing ambiguity and heighten transparency through unambiguous communication.

Correctness

Another pivotal theme identified when analysing the interview transcript is correctness. In any organizational setting, correctness, also known as accuracy or the precision of information, is critical no matter how much information is disclosed. How is it that correctness is identified or determined in communication? Interviewee 2, 5, 10, and 11 stated company standards and policies to be a benchmark for correctness.

“To ensure that the information was reliable and trustworthy, I will refer to our Financial policies.” (R2)

“Information given are often based on organization normal practice and industry standards.” (R5)

“I think my experience with the info presented has been very great. I believe it's largely due to the ownership mentality present in my workplace, where each info shared needs to be valid and backed up with examples. So we can be certain that it's accurate and can be trusted.” (R10)

“I believe information is precise and free from errors when the explanation aligns with accounting standards and company resources tools.” (R11)

Uniquely, Interviewee 10 also highlights that its the company’s standard of having ownership mentality that helps in accuracy. With that being said, organizational standards and policies are frequently reliable resources when it comes to communication correctness and allow employees to show that they are committed to aligning their communication with what is correct. Other than the standards and policies

of an organization, the interviewees also find transparency by relying on those of expertise and experience. This can be seen in the examples shown below.

“I would also re-confirm facts with different colleagues to make sure we are all aligned with the same goals and objectives.” (R1)

“Information from my colleagues are free from errors because every information given to me will be clarified by my manager first.” (R3)

“I always have positive perceptions on information presented by any member of the organization given their experience and expertise.” (R5)

“It’s reliable and trustworthy as they are the experts. I believe their qualifications also make them trusted sources.” (R6)

“The information shared by my colleague is in line with what I want because they have more experience than me. They have been working in this legal field more than five, six, seven years more than me...if i’m having problems with clients banking documentation, I will not only depend on my colleague but I will ensure the accuracy of the information from the bank itself.” (R9)

“It’s helpful because they are more knowledgeable and have more experience.” (R13)

“My colleague told me that i’m able to teach a certain topic, so I will either check the guidebook or go back to my superior to see if what my colleague said and my superior is align.” (R14)

As seen by the statements above, the interviewees frequently try to have direct contact with those in authority as points of reference. By double-checking and seeking advice from individuals possessing credible knowledge or have more experience, they are able to improve the accuracy and dependability of the messages they receive. One interviewee however highlighted that the reality is that there are challenges in achieving accuracy when sharing information especially when it comes to handling new projects. This can be seen in the statement below.

“I tend to receive low accuracy and a high number of errors in the information I receive which is totally understandable since it is a new challenge for everyone to face.” (R1)

The statement made by interviewee 1 appeared to have an optimistic overall tone, despite the stated low accuracy and inaccuracies, as she viewed the situation with understanding. This study explored how transparency is practiced in workplace communication among employees in Malaysia, guided by Schnackenberg et al. (2021) three dimensions of organizational transparency, disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, and Communication Climate Theory (James and Jones, 1974). These frameworks provided a comprehensive lens through which the nuanced practices and challenges of transparency were interpreted. Based on the findings, fifteen employees with over one year of

experience working in Malaysia shared insights into how transparency functions within their organizational environments. Although transparency is widely acknowledged as crucial for trust, motivation, and accountability (Heeter, 2023), the findings reveal that practicing it effectively is far more complex, especially in culturally diverse and hierarchical settings. The first theme, exposure (aligned with Schnackenberg's "disclosure"), refers to the degree to which information is shared openly. As Hopp and Fisher (2021) noted, disclosure builds credibility and long-term relationships. In this study, employees recognized feedback, information platforms, and disclosure styles (complete, gradual, or biased) as key practices. The active use of feedback supports findings by Jiang and Shen (2023), who emphasized its role in shaping transparent environments. Additionally, digital tools like Basecamp and Notion were viewed as effective transparency enablers, echoing Chopra and Bhilare (2020), who highlighted the role of online platforms in improving communication speed and inclusivity.

The second theme, lucidity, reflects Schnackenberg et al. (2021) "clarity" component. Clarity was found to vary depending on language use, social background, and communication modes. The presence of jargon-free, concise language was praised, supporting Jalli and Idris (2023) view that responsible transparency requires comprehensible messaging. However, as per Communication Climate Theory, the findings also suggest that cultural and generational differences can obstruct lucidity. Employees highlighted face-to-face communication and real-world demonstrations as effective strategies for increasing understanding, suggesting that clarity is not only linguistic but also contextual and experiential. The third theme, correctness, aligns with Schnackenberg et al. (2021) dimension of "accuracy." Employees generally associated information accuracy with organizational policies and colleagues' expertise. This aligns with the notion that credibility is upheld through consistency and factual integrity in communication (Ananny and Crawford, 2018). However, inconsistencies, particularly during new project rollouts, raised concerns about the reliability of shared information. This highlights the importance of decision-making transparency and information validation, especially in top-down communication. These findings are consistent with Kim (2017) assertion that upper management plays a pivotal role in modeling transparency. In some organizations, selective disclosure and communication breakdowns created gaps in trust and understanding. Such patterns reflect the challenges noted by Ananny and Crawford (2018), who stated that transparency requires both trust and vulnerability, qualities often lacking in rigid hierarchical cultures. Moreover, Malaysian-specific issues such as historical governance scandals and current employee expectations contextualize the need for transparency in the workplace. The findings resonate with these national concerns, demonstrating that transparency is not only an internal organizational value but also a societal demand, with implications for ethics, satisfaction, and employee retention. In sum, this study demonstrates that while many organizations aspire to transparency, its implementation is fragmented and uneven. As Communication Climate Theory suggests, transparent practices flourish in climates that support openness, empathy, and mutual respect. The data further reinforces Schnackenberg et al. (2021) model, validating that transparency is a dynamic interplay between disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, each influenced by organizational culture, communication strategies, and individual perceptions.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how transparency is used and experienced in workplace communication among employees in Malaysia, with a focus on Schnackenberg et al. (2021) three dimensions of organizational transparency, disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, supported by the Communication Climate Theory. Through qualitative interviews with fifteen employees from various organizations, the study provided rich insights into the multifaceted nature of transparent communication in real workplace contexts. The findings revealed that while organizations aim to promote transparency, its implementation is often inconsistent and shaped by internal culture, communication practices, and individual experiences. Disclosure was observed through practices such as feedback mechanisms, use of communication platforms, and varying levels of information exposure ranging from complete to biased disclosure. Clarity was found to be impacted by factors such as language simplicity, social and cultural differences, and the mode of communication, with a preference for face-to-face and demonstrative communication. Accuracy, or correctness, was largely attributed to organizational policies and the expertise of communicators, though occasional inconsistencies, especially during new initiatives raised concerns among employees. Overall, the study concludes that transparent communication is not merely about sharing information, but about how it is shared, its timing, clarity, and credibility. It requires a supportive communication climate where trust, inclusivity, and openness are practiced consistently. The study highlights the need for organizations to cultivate these values actively, through policy, training, and leadership modelling, especially in a Malaysian context where transparency remains both a workplace and societal expectation.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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